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The Presbyterian Record

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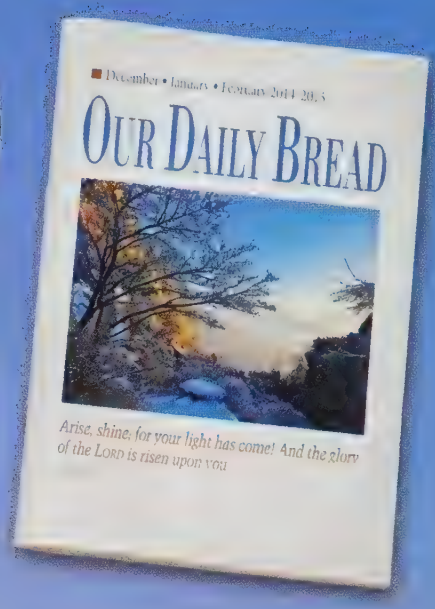

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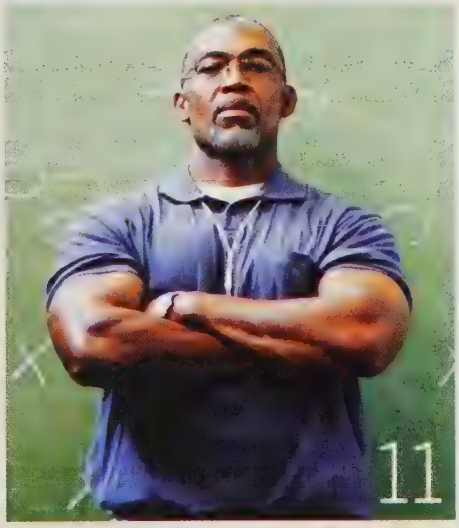
Can We Talk?

Recent discussions on big issues have been less than cordial. Is there room for humility and grace at the table?



Cover illustration by Katy Lemay/ Anna Goodson

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FOR THE RECORD

Practice Real Love

We need constructive conversations on many topics. By David Harris

Conversations are at the heart of relationships.

They no doubt happen in smaller settings—presbyteries, committees, our homes—but at present there is no mechanism for face-to-face discussion across the church.

Some people wistfully hope conversations can or should happen at assembly. But overtures, motions and the like are part of the procedures that govern debates, not conversations. Speakers try to be heard; rarely do they listen. And how meaningful would a conversation among a few hundred people be anyway for the other 60,000 in pews on Sunday?

For sure, we try to encourage conversations in the pages of the *Record*—that is our sole purpose.

But more is needed. Conversations should be happening in our church communities: Aboriginal and justice issues and the environment generate daily tragic stories, yet there is no reference to church participation in any of them. Where and how is the church fostering and guiding constructive conversations on these issues?

Take Aboriginal issues. The Presbyterian Church has repented as an institution for its role in the sorry history of residential schools. But what are we doing about it now? An apology for the past is fine; it rings hollow if there is nothing done in the present and plans made for the future.

Thousands of Canadian Aboriginal people are living on inadequately serviced reserves or in wretched prisons. On reserves, fresh water remains a huge problem; in prisons, the largest identifiable group is Aboriginal.

Aboriginal people make up about four per cent of our population, yet they represent almost a quarter of the federal prisoners. More than 40 per cent of all incarcerated women in Canada are Aboriginal. On top of that, thousands of young Aboriginal women have "disappeared." Many undoubtedly raped and murdered.

Overlapping all this are the number of mentally ill prisoners who are grossly mistreated under archaic concepts of punishment deemed outmoded, ineffective and cruel 150 years ago. Governing prison ideology has no room for restorative justice—which is at the heart of our Judeo-Christian faith.

Here's Jesus' good news (gospel) to humanity in a phrase: "God is love."

And here's part of the beloved disciple John's first letter as translated by Presbyterian theologian Eugene Peterson: "This is how we've come to understand and experience love: Christ sacrificed his life for us. ... If you see some brother or sister in need and have the means to do something about it but turn a cold shoulder and do nothing, what happens to God's love? It disappears. And you made it disappear. My dear children, let's not just talk about love; let's practice real love. This is the only way we'll know we're living truly, living in God's reality."

If we truly want to live God's reality, if we truly want to find ways to bring about the kingdom, to make Christ present to people in our communities, we need face-to-face conversations with our Aboriginal brothers and sisters. We need conversations about how to restore broken people to the fullness of life in community, not inhuman existence in prison cells.

Or, as Paul wrote to the Celtic church in Turkey: "If someone falls into sin, forgivingly restore him, saving your critical comments for yourself. You might be needing forgiveness before the day's out. Stoop down and reach out to those who are oppressed. Share their burdens, and so complete Christ's law. If you think you are too good for that, you are badly deceived."

David Harris is the Record's *publisher and editor.*

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Letters

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

Something must have happened the last few months of 2014: We received a much larger than normal flurry of very passionate letters. More than we can accommodate in this space. Even heavily edited as these are we're unable to present them all; they are available in their entirety online. There are also many comments at the end of the articles on our website.

You are all passionate about the subjects being debated. We will share as many voices as possible over the next few months.

Let the Word Dwell in You

Re The Will of Christ, October

In my work as a college counsellor, I frequently provide support to young adult students who are struggling to be open about their sexual orientation and to develop meaningful loving relationships. Some are deeply distressed and devastated by families who reject them and their relationships, and churches that have turned against them and no longer welcome their participation.

I pray that we Presbyterians will have the faith and courage to work through any controversy, and provide recognition and legitimacy to the relationships of all people, regardless of sexual orientation

JANET CURRIE NORRIS, VANCOUVER

The church has always welcomed everyone into its fellowship but there has also always been the scriptural warning which has to be heeded.

In 2 Peter 2:1-2, it tells us we have to be aware of false teachers among ›

LETTERS, continued

us. Therefore I, and I hope many others, will want to adhere to Colossians 3:16, and "be thankful; let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom."

GERRY SCHALK, CRANBROOK, B.C.

After some 60 years engaged in various debates, I'm out of the loop—too old and tired. But I applaud the idea of an assembly debate on homosexuality. I only hope the experience of our Montreal presbytery in the '90s is not taken as a case in point—as Mark Lewis did in your pages. We were not debating homosexuality as such, although the Yes side (in Quebec everything is *Oui ou Non*) promoted it so. Rather, the issue was that the '94 assembly ruling was being contradicted by the presbytery. Instead of following proper procedure (e.g., an overture to precipitate debate) some wished to act in direct defiance of GA, denying our ordination vows about government by church courts. The '98 GA upheld the No group, although its commission report was much tougher than expected. So we lost a promising candidate and a fine congregation to faulty procedure. One lesson here is that our rules were framed to maintain good relationships, not to tie our hands. Another might be: don't get caught in a simple Yes-or-No. You'll never recover from the split; try for something in-between. Debates are usually Either/Or but where is Both/And?

JOSEPH MCLELLAND, MONTREAL

Encouragements and Bluntness

Re Time to Listen for the Spirit's Voice, November

Speaking from the viewpoint of a retired teacher, my experience has been that I have never known a student who did not want both a father and a mother. I have heard the heartbreaking longing in many small voices for a missing parent. We cannot and should not echo the old fallacy that children are resilient. They can be hurt very badly.

CHARLOTTE BENJAMIN, GRANDE PRAIRIE, ALTA.

As a member of East Toronto presbytery, which is one of the creative forces behind an overture destined to reach General Assembly, I am glad for each of your articles on the topic.

You are not alone in praying that our branch of Christ's church needs to engage one another "in grace-filled conversation."

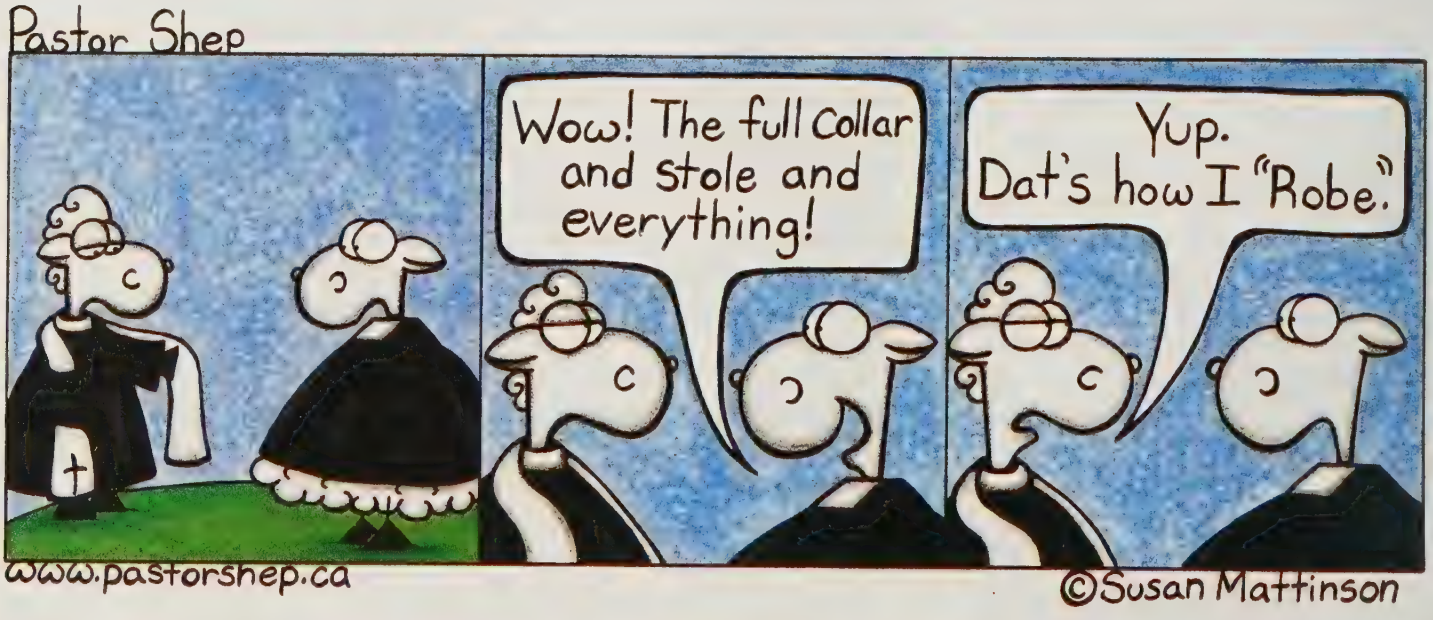
May God continue to strengthen and use you as a blessing to the Presbyterian Church.

And, as a 12-year coordinator of East Toronto's Sexual Abuse Committee I was heartened to see the demission notice as well. As a denomination we are rarely that declarative.

DONNA WELLS, TORONTO

I encourage you not to oversimplify what is an extremely complex subject—more complex than, in my opinion, your editorial suggests.

I encourage you to make clear when you are stating a personal opinion. There are still people who read the *Record* who assume its contents contain church doctrine. As you have pointed out on many occasions, it is an independent journal that is free to speak as it wishes. Your opinion stated in the



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November editorial is, at this point, not church doctrine.

And I encourage you to avoid hermeneutical gaffes such as bringing the issues of slavery and women's rights into the debate over homosexual activity. While there may be other arguments that support your position, that one does not. A careful reading of scripture suggests a redemptive movement on the former two, but not on the latter. To that end, I commend to your interest *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals* by William J. Webb.

JEFF LOACH, NOBLETON, ONT.

"Time to Listen for the Spirit's Voice." I couldn't agree more. I have been working on that for all my adult life. I was glad the editor raised the question, "What is God's will?" and that he gave the opinion, "I think listening prayer is what is needed to answer that question." It seems to me that he is on the right track. Unfortunately, I don't know how to do "listening prayer." I end up rehashing my own ideas. The rest of the article reflected many of the beliefs professed by some of our sister churches and made the assertion that, "Scripture suggests that God does not shun any part of creation and surely would not deny love and companionship to people because of something intrinsically part of them." That's no help to me in trying to make any sense of the research results on "intrinsic." Even though many investigators have tried, no one has a definitive answer to "Is it nature or nurture?" or, "Did God create more than two genders?"

GEORGINA M. BONE, SASKATOON

I will be blunt. Do you take Presbyterians for fools?

Listen to the Spirit's voice, you say! Rather, you tell us what you want the Spirit's voice to say.

What sickens me is that you pretend at the outset to take a neutral view, telling us to listen to the Spirit. But then, by the end of the article, you come out as an apparent supporter of the affirmation of same-sex relationships in the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Now you're telling us to listen to you. Why don't you just say it plainly?

You appear to be attempting to deceive and sway others to your cause. That is dishonest.

Not only that, but you dare usurp the position of the Holy Spirit? Do you know what the word for that is?

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POP CHRISTIANITY

Blessed Are Your Ears

To hear what you do not hear. By Andrew Faiz

I have many friends who are actors. When asked, the veterans amongst them will tell you the most important tool an actor has is the ability to listen. A bad actor only "acts" when speaking and goes dead when they have no lines. A good actor is most alive on stage when they have no dialogue.

May I be so bold as to say that you and I, and most of us in our denomination, are really bad actors? We're not that good at listening. There is so much talking going on these days, and so many ways to talk, yet it seems most of us are a lot more eager to get in our voice, instead of listening to others.

Others. Yeah, there's that word again. Jesus spent a lot of energy teaching about loving neighbours. He had a very generous definition for that word. He also had a thing or two to say about not listening—"Blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it" (Matthew 13:16-17).

Not for the first time I want to have that conversation with Christ: "Exactly what am I blessed to have heard that I'm not hearing? Or see that I'm not seeing? War? Famine? Disease? People going on about how the church isn't this, or isn't that? This stuff is exhausting!"

I know you know what I mean. Like me you feel that tightness in your chest when somebody—some other—starts talking about all that negative stuff. When they start listing all the things that are wrong, all those isms, all those theological, historical, cultural, sociological theories; all those Bible quotations interpreted, sometimes squinched, sometimes stretched, to fit an argument. And you scream inside yourself, "When will you please shut up?"

Now is the time to challenge ourselves theologically, emotionally, spiritually. That is the glue that holds community together. To find the weakest link and strengthen it through prayer and conversation

We know the answer to that question: When we start to listen. (Between you and me: I'm not very good at it, because I have such witty things to say and I've worked so hard and so long to be so certain of my ideas.)

Now is the time, at the top of a new year, 15 years into a new millennium, in a post-denominational, post-post-modernist, post-Christendom environment—how many markers do we need?—to listen to the cry of others in our midst. We have many challenges ahead, so many anxieties to face, so many failures to account for, so many glories to thank for, so many voices to listen to.

Now is the time to challenge ourselves theologically, emotionally, spiritually. That is the glue that holds community together. To find the weakest link and strengthen it through prayer and conversation.

And we are a community, you and I. Our national numbers may be declining but we're still here. We're linked to each other through this denomination. We're followers of Christ and we struggle daily to know what that means. We need each other.

We need our teaching elders to guide us. We need our broken souls to show us the cracks in our seemingly perfect system. We need those outside our community to challenge us. We need prayer and worship and a joyful song in our hearts.

And we need to listen to each other.

Andrew Faiz is the Record's *senior editor.*

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Meet the 2015 Moderator Nominees

Six ministers are on the ballot. By Connie Wardle

Presbyters have a tough decision ahead of them this year with six names on the ballot for Moderator of the 2015 General Assembly. All of the nominees took some time out of their busy Advent schedules to answer some questions and help you get to know them a little better. You can read all of their responses online at presbyterianrecord.ca.

Rev. Helen Smith is minister at Centennial, Calgary, Alta. She spent nine years as program director at Evangel Hall, Toronto, has worked as a minister on staff at the Calgary Urban Project Society, and as director of Camp Kannawin, near Sylvan Lake, Alta. She's convened the Life and Mission Agency committee and served on the church doctrine and Justice Ministries committees, has been moderator of three presbyteries, served on an area council for the World Council of Churches and been a part of the Kairos Calgary group.

"I would describe my passion using Dan Steigerwald's image as 'sowing seeds of shalom,'" she said. "Imagine if every morning we got up and said to ourselves and to God, "So what seeds of shalom shall we sow today?"

Rev. John Barry Forsyth is minister at St. Andrew's in Sherbrooke, Que. He has served churches in four provinces, been moderator of three presbyteries and two synods, has a weekly radio broadcast, and founded a hospitality program for students in the community. And in his spare time he trains for and competes in triathlons.

"We have incredible strengths in our church," he said. "There is a wonderful diversity of expression. We have proven, over and over again, that we are deeply committed to one another. We have overcome many obstacles in the past. I am confident that our church will meet the challenges which it faces today with wisdom and sensitivity."

Rev. Karen Horst is minister at St. Andrew's in Orillia, Ont. She has served on many national committees, including the Life and Mission Agency and International Affairs committees and as convener of the Presbyterian World Service & Development committee. She was on design teams for Triennium, a youth event of the Presbyterian Church (USA), has been involved with the National Presbyterian Women's Gathering, and has written curricula, study guides and courses for many groups and events.

"I have been in a lifelong quest to understand how faith is stimulated and encouraged," she said. "I celebrate an authenticity of faith that is willing to shape theology as we see with new eyes through the revelation given to us through the Holy Spirit." ›

GENERAL ASSEMBLY, continued

Rev. Dr. Kevin Livingston is associate professor of pastoral ministry at Tyndale Seminary, Toronto. He's also been a minister at churches in British Columbia and Ontario. He serves on the board of governors of Presbyterian College, Montreal, and chairs the board of trustees of Latin American Mission (Canada). And he's the author of *A Missiology of the Road: Early Perspectives in David Bosch's Theology of Mission and Evangelism.*

"I would love to foster a conversation about what it would look like for the Presbyterian Church in Canada to go missional, pondering our identity and calling as God's sent people into the world, and then rethinking our core values and ministries in light of that vocation," he said.

Rev. Marion Barclay MacKay is minister at St. Andrew's, Sydney Mines in Cape Breton, N.S. She was born in B.C. so she can proudly say she has lived on both coasts. She also lived in Ghana for a few years helping develop a lay education program for the Presbyterian Church there, and in Alberta where she started her ministry career.

"For me, life itself is a spiritual journey and I often find myself reflecting on the question, 'How might I live into the realm of God in this 'here and now' moment?'" she said. "For me, the realm of God is the abundant life that comes to us through Jesus Christ so such a question is humbling, grounding, and provoking given the range of people and life experiences that we face day by day."

Rev. Dr. Nancy Cocks is minister at St. John's in Medicine Hat, Alta., and a former professor of pastoral theology at the Vancouver School of Theology and Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax. She's worked with the Canadian Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches, has served on many national committees, and for three years she was in Scotland as deputy warden of the Iona Community's island centres. She's also a prolific writer, penning 16 books for children and two books of worship resources.

"Perhaps the Celtic sense of 'pilgrimage' best describes my journey—willing to go where God's Spirit is leading or pushing," she said. "I have a deep trust in God which accompanies a sense of adventure."

Ballots were sent to presbyteries in December and the votes will be counted on April 1. The 141st General Assembly begins June 4 at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver.

CHORUS CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

Approximately 80 current and former members of the Ontario Presbyterian Chorus gathered to celebrate 25 years of music ministry on Nov. 9th at Jubilee, Stayner, Ont. The concert was given to a full congregation and a roast beef dinner was served at nearby Centennial United. Presentations were made to Alastair McCallum, choir director since January 1992, and Catherine Walker, retired music director at Jubilee.

The chorus presented for the first time a commissioned anthem, "We Sing So All Can Hear the Story!" written by Nancy Price and Don Besig. It will be published this spring.

The OPC is a combination of three choir groups. It was created in December 1989 when Ian Woods (who passed away in 2011), director of the Covenanter Singers and the Presbyterian Men's Chorus, and Catherine Walker, who asked members of the Georgian Bay Chorus to participate, presented a joint Christmas cantata.

For the last 22 years, the OPC has been under the direction of Alastair McCallum and accompanied by Mina Park, who has been with the chorus since 1993. The OPC has travelled throughout Canada, Switzerland, Scotland and Ireland, and are planning a trip to the Maritimes in June.

PHOTO COURTESY OF KATHERINE ALLEN.

We are grateful for the opportunity to provide for the spiritual needs of the congregations we have sung in, and for the gift of exploring God's creation.

The chorus performs from September to May. For information go to pccweb.ca/ontario-presbyterian-chorus. — *Katherine Allen is the secretary for OPC.*

ROSS LOCKHART INSTALLED AT ST. ANDREW'S HALL

Rev. Ross Lockhart (right) was installed as director of ministry leadership and education, and director of denominational formation at St. Andrew's Hall during a service in November. Here Lockhart poses with his colleagues, Rev. Dr. Richard Topping, principal of the Vancouver School of Theology, and Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris, dean of St. Andrew's Hall and Moderator of the 2014 General Assembly. Watch for Lockhart's new column, Leadershift, in the *Record* beginning this month.

PHOTO COURTESY OF PATTY FARRIS.

Back to the Sanctuary

Rev. Joyce Yanishewski sported her clerical robes and a hard hat at church on Oct. 26, the first Sunday the congregation of St. Andrew's, Thunder Bay, Ont., was able to worship in the sanctuary since chunks of plaster fell from the ceiling in the summer of 2013.

Thanks to donations from members of the congregation and community, as well as $15,000 from the Paterson Foundation, $80,000 from the Presbytery of Superior, and $70,000 left from a settlement with the insurance company, the congregation managed to pay about $200,000 worth of restoration costs and come out debt-free.

It seems like "no money has come to us without a story," Yanishewski said. "It's just phenomenal."

Even the presbytery's contribution came from a GIC established with funds left by a member of St. Andrew's, May McKay, who according to her great niece loved to sit in the sanctuary in her later years.

"It was just like a full circle for that money to come back so many years later to the very space that this woman didn't want to leave," Yanishewski said.

The building, which was constructed in 1909, still needs a lot of restoration work, she said. "We talk an awful lot about our mission and why are we doing this. Because if we're just restoring our building to make it a beautiful building, well, we can do that, and it's wonderful because we want to honour God here. But it's because we want to do ministry here. We want to be reaching people here. And that's the real reason for restoration. It's because we want to do ministry. Good ministry with all of us." —*CW*

Presbyterian College, Montreal, Celebrates 150 Years

It's been a century and a half since Presbyterian College was established in Montreal and it's aiming to celebrate with a variety of events throughout 2015.

Plans for the year include history displays in the college's foyer, a gala and worship event in May, conferences, history walks, and the publication of a book to be called *Still Voices Still Heard*, which will bring together sermons and addresses from the college's 150 years.

The college was founded in a different context than the one it finds itself in today, but its ministry is no less important, said Rev. Lucille Marr, the college's chaplain and chair of the planning committee.

"It was a very French Catholic context," she said. "Now it's a very French secular context. But what they did know was that there was a lot of spiritual need and that they had an important mission. And the spiritual need is probably much different today because people don't have church—the Quiet Revolution and so on. So the presence of an English theological college like this one is really, really important."

The Presbyterian Church tends to think of itself as a small denomination and may not realize the extent of the contributions it has made, said Rev. Dr. Dale Woods, the college's principal.

"A hundred and fifty years is a long time. Over that period of time, graduates from this college have had a significant role to play in the life of the church, in the life of the country and I'd say in the life of the world.

"The whole world is God's world," he said. "Every part of it is connected to the mission of God. I think that it's worth taking a step back and seeing what's been contributed to the world." —*CW*

MISSION

A Voice for the Voiceless

The Presbyterian Church's newest congregation. By Margaret Mullin

I have a story of healing and reconciliation to tell.

On Nov. 30, 2014, the Sunday worship fellowship of Winnipeg Inner City Missions was constituted by the Presbytery of Winnipeg as a Presbyterian congregation. Christened Place of Hope Presbyterian Church, 43 of the 45 charter members are of Aboriginal or Métis heritage, and 42 are economically impoverished, struggling daily to exist on incomes well below the acceptable income levels as determined by the province of Manitoba.

Though a mission of the national church, our Sunday worship fellowship has never been recognized as an official congregation. Being one spoke in the larger wheel of Winnipeg Inner City Missions has been essential to the congregation, which is financially unable to be self-supporting. And without official status as a congregation, the people had no vote in the governing structures of our church.

Self-determination is a key component in the healing process and it is essential for the reclamation of self-esteem for our Aboriginal people. In terms of the generational effects of colonization and of the residential schools, having a strong voice and a vote within church courts (session, presbytery and General Assembly) is an important step in the process of reconciliation between the church and Aboriginal people.

The Presbytery of Winnipeg, in partnership with Winnipeg Inner City Missions, has worked in an innovative way to satisfy the 'rule' of the church and to work in the best interests of a group of indigenous peoples worshipping under the leadership of an ordained Presbyterian minister. This concerted effort in itself is an example of healing and reconciliation working at its best.

The elders of Place of Hope Presbyterian Church, Winnipeg.

Standing strong as Aboriginal people, the charter members are willing to work together and walk alongside their non-Aboriginal brothers and sisters in Christ into an undetermined future

More amazingly though, the charter members have taken a huge step in overcoming their historical—and often negative—past with "The Church." They are willing to forgive, and are freely joining with God's people of Presbyterian persuasion in the work of Christ. Standing strong as Aboriginal people, the charter members are willing to work together and walk alongside their non-Aboriginal brothers and sisters in Christ into an undetermined future. With a strong voice and a vote they will help determine what's next for the church. And so they should.

Of significant note is that one of the four elected ruling elders is actually not of Aboriginal descent, but European. When choosing the four elders, the 45 members were asked to choose up to three people from the congregation whom they would trust to pray with them, help them make a difficult decision, and be respectful of Aboriginal culture and spiritual way of being. This was done by secret ballot. Those with the most votes were ordained as ruling elders of the congregation. One of those was Susan Currie, our parish social worker who has been with us for 10 years.

Susan was overwhelmed, surprised, and honoured by the respect and trust of the people, despite her lack of Aboriginal heritage.

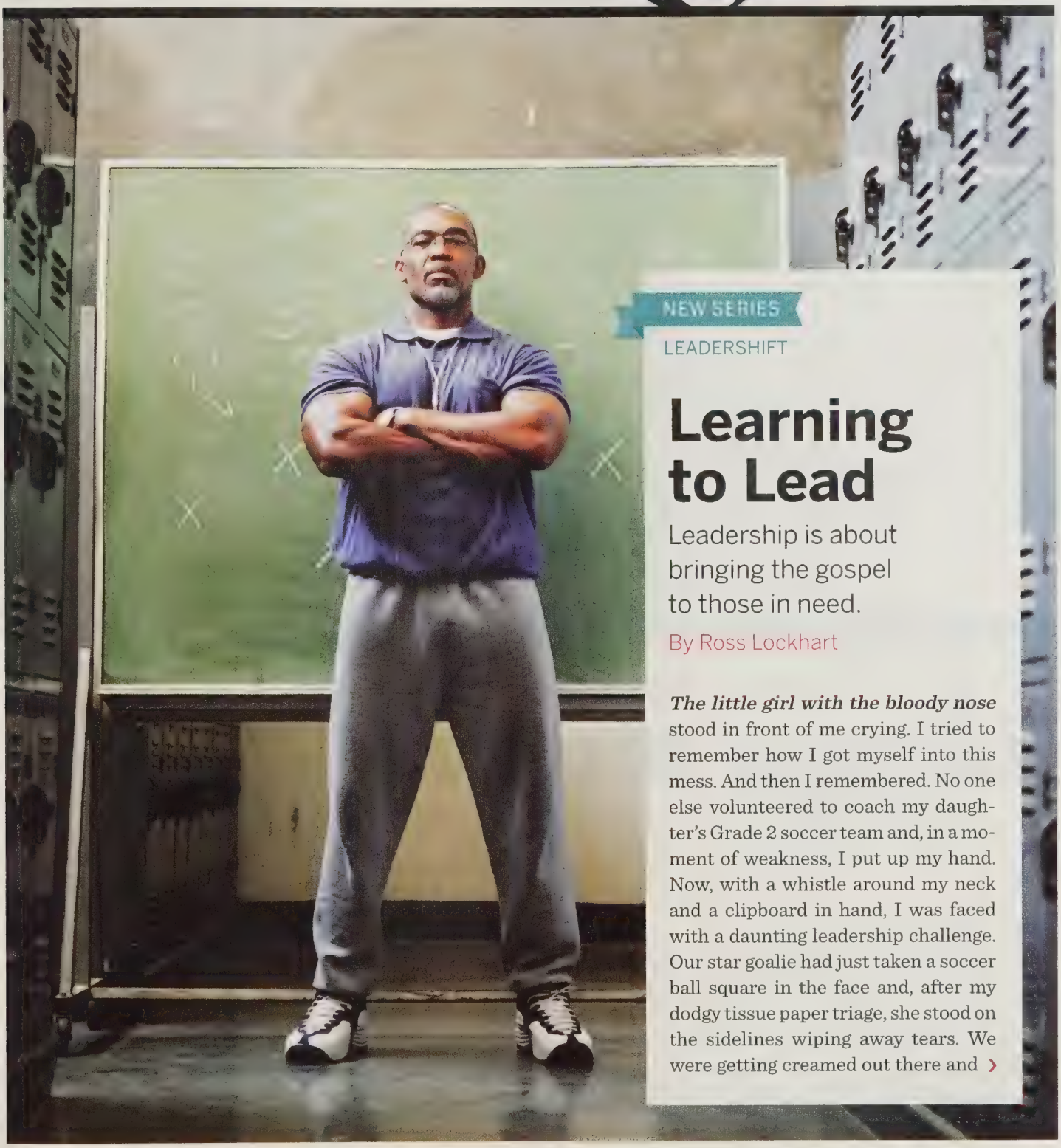
Healing and reconciliation, indeed.

Rev. Margaret Mullin is executive director of Winnipeg Inner City Missions, an outreach ministry of the Presbyterian Church serving impoverished residents of downtown Winnipeg. She is also the minister at Place of Hope Presbyterian Church.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MARGARET MULLIN.

Faith

Deepening your relationship with God



NEW SERIES

LEADERSHIFT

Learning to Lead

Leadership is about bringing the gospel to those in need.

By Ross Lockhart

The little girl with the bloody nose stood in front of me crying. I tried to remember how I got myself into this mess. And then I remembered. No one else volunteered to coach my daughter's Grade 2 soccer team and, in a moment of weakness, I put up my hand. Now, with a whistle around my neck and a clipboard in hand, I was faced with a daunting leadership challenge. Our star goalie had just taken a soccer ball square in the face and, after my dodgy tissue paper triage, she stood on the sidelines wiping away tears. We were getting creamed out there and ›

THINKSTOCK

LEADERSHIFT, continued

I needed her back in the game. "You'll be okay," I said, desperately scanning the bleachers for her Mum. "You're not hurt too badly, are you?" Sniffles were her only reply. Desperate, I reached into my memory and quoted my old high school rugby coach, "Don't worry, pain is just weakness leaving your body." Oh man, did I just say that?

In the mainline church, many have lost confidence in leadership after helplessly watching a membership decline across denominations since the mid 1960s. Like my little soccer team, Jesus' team appears to be taking a beating these days. Some are keen to rush to business models of leadership and apply them to our teaching and ruling elders. As the former senior pastor of a congregation filled with executives, I would kindly receive their "airport bookstore cast-offs" on the way out of church or before a session meeting. In many cases, it was helpful to read what the business world was holding up as essential for leading organizations today. Leadership, in this case, would sound something like *Forbes* magazine declaring "a process of social influence, which maximizes the efforts of others towards the achievement of a goal." Yes, there is something to that. Just as there is value in other business sources that suggest leadership as a process "bringing the future to the present."

Leadership, however, is always shaped in some way by the context. For example, apparently the way you lead and motivate high school rugby players is different from how you speak to a little girl's soccer team. Leadership is rooted in relationships. It is not the ultimate triumph of style over substance, and it most certainly has more to do with character than a neat and tidy bag of tips and tricks.

As Christians, created in the image of God, redeemed by the blood of Christ on the cross and sustained by the power of the Holy Spirit in the world, we speak of leadership in a particular way. Biblically, we are hemmed in by expressions of God's revelation like that in John 10:11—"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep." Hmm, that doesn't sound like a style of leadership Dr. Phil would champion. That sounds a lot more like an invitation for us to pattern our lives and leadership on the mutual, self-giving love revealed at the heart of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I read a brilliant article lately where Pope Francis suggested that Christian leadership is about bringing the healing power of the gospel to everyone in need. He said Christian leadership is about staying close enough to the marginalized that we might be recognized as "shepherds living with the smell of sheep." Hmm. I like that. I wonder how might church leaders today be recognized as apprentices of the Good Shepherd, smelling like sheep?

As Christian leaders, by the Holy Spirit's power, we help people take steps towards faith in Jesus, moving from fear to faith, death to life, darkness to light. The reward? Every now and then, we witness God's transforming power at work in the world and in people's lives. Sometimes even just a parabolic glimpse of the Kingdom, like when the little girl wiped away tears and said, "I'm ready to get back in. I'm ready to do my part." Off she ran, a white tissue floating behind, her willingness to risk for something beyond herself reminding me of another young woman who once said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

Rev. Dr. Ross Lockhart is the director of ministry leadership and education at St. Andrew's Hall, Vancouver. This is the first of a year-long column on leadership.

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THINKSTOCK

PROGRESSIVE LECTIONARY

Into the Water Again

Step into the water with Jesus, but at your own risk. By Laurence DeWolfe

The last time I wrote about the baptism of Jesus I got more response than any of my other columns. I was accused of heresy and intellectual dishonesty. I was the topic of conversation in at least one presbytery. I enjoyed the notoriety. I've hesitated to approach the text and topic again! But I've run out of Sundays and have to come back to where I began.

In that column I said the first christologies, what people believed about Jesus, were "adoptionist." The stories we have in the gospels are older than the gospels. They come from a time earlier than Paul, though he began to speak and write before the gospels were written. Paul represents a second generation of thought, and inspired proclamation, ›

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The faithful mothers and fathers of the church, who lived between the New Testament and the Creeds, formed what we know as our Christian faith. We can, and must, learn from them

about who Jesus is. At the level of the stories the gospels tell we don't meet a Christ with the mantle of doctrine on his shoulders. We see some hints of what the next generation will begin to put together. John's gospel, the last written, represents just one of the later conclusions about the full identity of Jesus.

The gospels don't agree about how Jesus came into the world, but all four agree Jesus was baptized. Three tell of the Spirit descending upon him. They repeat a heavenly announcement that Jesus is the Son of God. That would appear to be, to the best we can discover, what the first disciples of Jesus knew.

What riled some people was my insistence that we have to "get behind the Creeds." Does that mean we have to reject them or ignore them? I suppose it is, if we think the only way to honour the Creeds is to treat them like scripture, and insist that Jesus came out of the water with the Nicene formula in his hands. Or that the gospels were written beside advance copies of the minutes of councils that wouldn't meet for another three centuries.

Between the New Testament and the Creeds, centuries of the church's life passed. Generations of inspired imagination, argument, Spirit-filled preaching, and outright war rose and fell as disciples of Jesus explored who Jesus is and how he came to be who he is. (I'm courting heresy with that last phrase. I plead the limits of language.)

When we leap across those centuries and read a fully formed, creedal Christology back into the gospels we isolate the Jesus who really lived from our lived reality. We also insulate ourselves from the challenge and comfort, surprise and offense that the stories of Jesus still offer us. We make the gospels into children's books about Jesus that we have to explain with our more mature, informed insights.

We take Jesus out of his own time, the time he shared with his first disciples and other people like us; who inhabit time and space, walk on the earth, are baptized in water, live and die as our times run on and out.

We also court the modern heresy of Henry Ford. History is bunk. What happened between the days of Jesus in Galilee and the era of Constantine in Nicea and Constantinople doesn't matter. The faithful mothers and fathers of the church, who lived between the New Testament and the Creeds, formed what we know as our Christian faith. We can, and must, learn from them.

Here's my challenge. Stand with Jesus in the water today. You don't know who he is. Maybe he doesn't know yet all that he is. Hear the words that proclaim him God's Son. Walk with him, right through the gospel story. Discover again what it means for you to be baptized, claimed and named as a child of God. Our PCC baptism liturgy reminds us, quoting 1 John 3:1, that is who we are, too.

Rev. Dr. Laurence DeWolfe teaches at Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax.

THINKSTOCK

RENEWAL

Start with Prayer

Let's begin correctly. By Fred Stewart

The church of my youth gathered each New Year's Eve to usher in the New Year with prayer. It was the acknowledgement that the enormity of the challenges ahead could only be faced with divine help. It was the idea of focusing individually and corporately on surrendering our agendas to the Lord. It was an act of worship as we looked to the Sovereign God to lead and protect us.

As Canadian Presbyterians enter 2015, we are faced with challenges that may seem insurmountable. For many of our congregations, there is much angst around finances and sustainability. For some of our clergy and congregational leaders there are questions of carrying on despite burnout and discouragement.

As a denomination we appear destined to enter into a time of debate over LGBT issues that has the ›

RENEWAL, continued

potential to bring much rancour and division to our congregations and presbyteries and even the floor of the General Assembly.

There are many questions surfacing. "What can we do?" and "What should we do?"

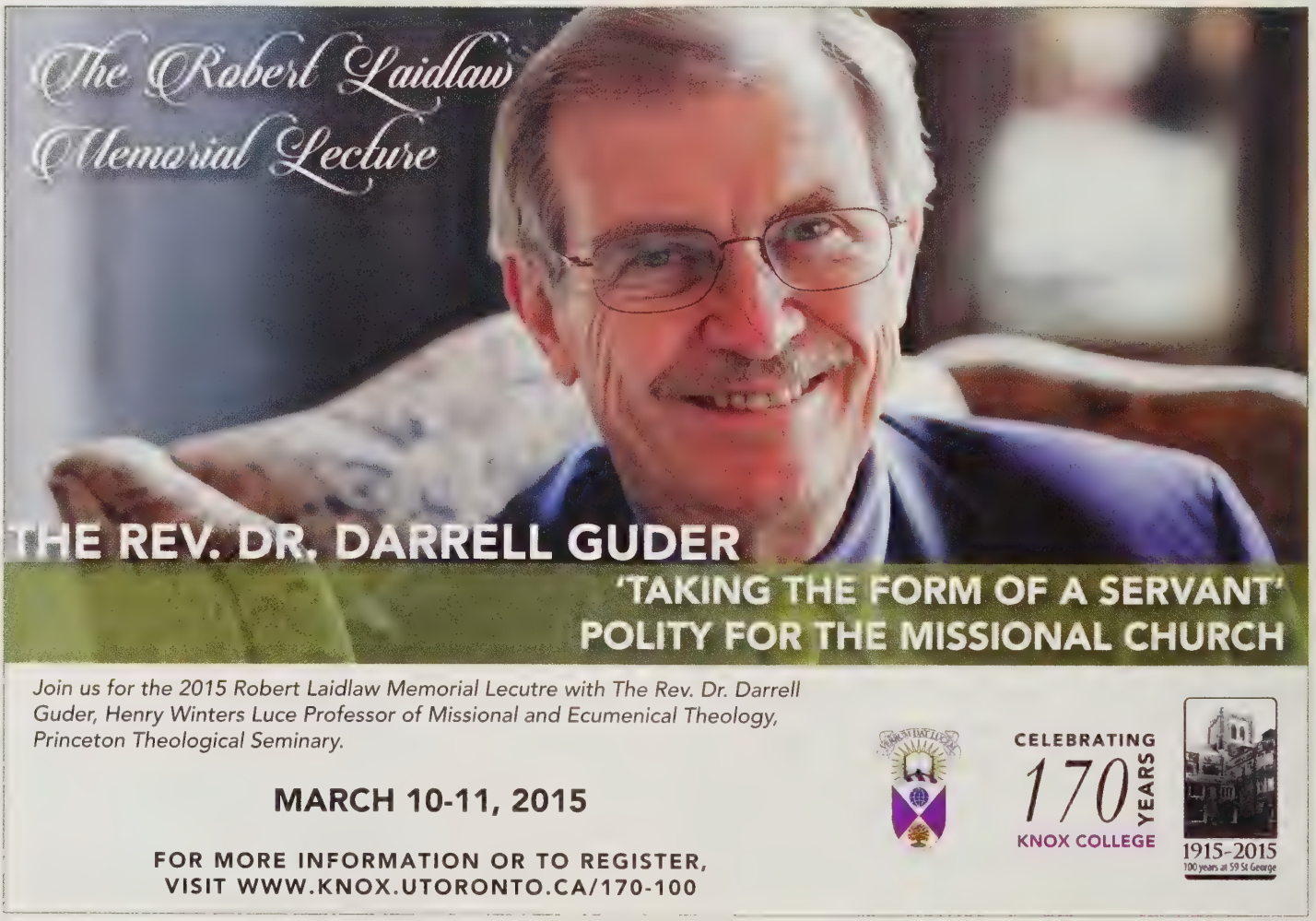
I assure you that this is not a time for easy answers. In fact, I have a growing concern for those who dismiss complex issues with quick, short statements that they believe conclusively eliminate all argument.

What does prayer accomplish? It keeps us in conversation with the One who actually knows how it all works out. It connects us to unlimited power and resources. In humility, we can ask for the Holy Spirit to change us where we need changing; which, I suspect, is at the heart of all renewal. It allows the love of God to be released in us, which is greater and truer than all our love.

So at the beginning of this New Year, rather than postulating what I believe are the answers, let's begin correctly. Let's start with prayer. Our ability as individuals, congregations, presbyteries and a denomination to navigate the uncertain future we face relies completely on our ability to journey in God's power, under His guidance and submitted to His will. We are part of the Church of Jesus Christ. The Church is the Triune God's idea. It is His gift of hope to the world. And don't forget to pray, as Jesus did, for the unity of his Church.

Start your day with prayer. Start your meetings with prayer. Start every new endeavour with prayer. And most certainly start each New Year with prayer.

Rev. Fred Stewart is executive director of the Renewal Fellowship.



THINKSTOCK

NEW SERIES

ORDINARY RADICAL

Creating Community

A year of walking the talk. By Amy MacLachlan

"I am convinced that Jesus came not just to prepare us to die but to teach us how to live."
—Shane Claiborne

The wonderful book club at my church, Knox, Oakville, Ont., recently read *The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical,* by Shane Claiborne. Claiborne founded the Simple Way—a peace-loving community in Philadelphia's inner city. For our group of mostly middle class moms and grandmoms, Claiborne's "simple way" of life challenged us. Sure, as Christians and regular church-goers, we know how much need there is in this broken world of ours. We're used to writing cheques for various outreach projects and collecting canned goods for the food bank. But does the Christian life demand more? ›

ORDINARY RADICAL, continued

Claiborne states that indeed it does—that the pain of this world is only made well when people gather together. When people from all backgrounds—race, religion and income level—meet each other face to face.

"I think that's what our world is desperately in need of—lovers, people who are building deep, genuine relationships with fellow strugglers along the way, and who actually know the faces of the people behind the issues they are concerned about," he writes. "A community of people who have fallen desperately in love with God and with suffering people, and who allow those relationships to disturb and transform them."

Claiborne's words inspired us. Inspired me. Still, with a husband and two young children, I'm not sure about donating everything I have to charity and starting a commune in downtown Toronto. And even though Claiborne flew to Iraq in the middle of the war to walk with the people there as a symbol of peace and acceptance, it doesn't mean I'm going to do the same. And, to be honest, I'm not sure I have the guts to walk up to a homeless guy and spend the night with him under an overpass, with nothing more than an old blanket while the rats run by.

But living a life of faith means we are called, demanded even, to live in a way that helps others. That loves others. That puts you before me. And that challenges us to learn the name of that homeless guy, and take him out for a coffee.

So what's a suburban girl to do?

I remember an environmentalist friend telling me once that the challenges facing our earth are so great that people often feel paralyzed. They mistakenly think that their small contribution—their mustard seed, if you will—can make no difference in a problem so vast, so instead they do nothing. Our little book group often voiced the same concern. What can I possibly do to truly make a difference? How can a regular, middle-class, suburban family take Jesus' teachings and Claiborne's example (who calls himself "an extremist for love") and put that to work in my life? What does this mean for me, my family, my job, my hobbies, my home? How can I take my small mustard seed of faith, of love, of giving, and use it to flavour all I do?

That's where this column comes in, which will also be a weekly blog on our website. A New Year's resolution, if you will. Each month this year I'll attempt a different aspect of "living as an ordinary radical." I'll take a concept Claiborne discusses in his book and apply it to my little slice of life. I think the trickiest part will be getting my family on board. (My eldest daughter once told me that my punishment for yelling would be buying her a new toy. Ah, consumerism!)

As I write this we're nearing Christmas—the quintessential holiday of excess. Even our wee bungalow is stuffed with stuff! (My husband might even go so far as to call me a bit of a pack rat.) So, I'm beginning with this:

Challenge #1: Purge, donate and buy less.

There's a wonderful section in *The Irresistible Revolution* that talks about charity. "We have no right not to be charitable," Claiborne says. And then, quoting Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker Movement, "If you have two coats, one of them belongs to the poor."

Yikes. I have way more than two coats.

I believe that change is needed; change in my life, your life, and the lives of all us "haves." I hope this will also be an example to my kids; a testament to the idea that church doesn't just happen on Sundays.

This should be a good start for the New Year. (And if you think this is too easy, stick with me; it gets harder!) I've already been trying to practice it, donating baby clothes, going through old books, and aiming to buy fewer gifts for the kids for Christmas. I'll tell you in February how it went. (Don't forget to check my blog for weekly updates! And please leave me your comments.)

This is a journey; won't you join me?

Amy MacLachlan is the Record's *managing editor.*

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Life

Thoughts and inspiration for your daily life

THINKSTOCK

FAMILY

Catching Fish... and Toddlers

The call to catch people.

By Katie Munnik

Sometimes the lectionary floors me. The juxtaposition of passages can be brilliant or bizarre, and when I saw what was slotted for January, I had to laugh.

Jonah 3:1-5,10 and Mark 1:14-20—Nineveh repents and God relents, followed by Jesus calling people to repent, then calling Simon and Andrew to leave their nets and become fishers of men.

So, you can see the connection. Repent, repent. But really? From poor old post-whale Jonah to fishers of men?

It's hard to be reverent when this is the reading material at hand.

So let's start with repentance. To repent is to turn away from the way things are and to turn towards the new. The baptism John offered ›

FAMILY, continued

was a baptism of repentance, and, in this passage from Mark, Jesus echoes John's words: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

And then he called the fishermen. He called them away from their nets and towards a new path as fishers of men. A bit of word play, but also a good representation of the preceding call. Leave where you were and begin something new.

I remember hearing these words as a child and something in them resounded with me. The phrase, fishers of men felt like poetry. And then in Sunday school, reading from the intentionally accessible Good News translation, I found Jesus saying there that he would teach the disciples to "catch people." Which solves the gendered language problem, but sounds creepy.

As if missional theology is about collecting people. Like dead butterflies.

As if people had to be trapped and pinned down into godly living.

But reading Jonah alongside Mark, we find a remarkable image of repentance. Jonah speaks the words and the people of Nineveh believe God. Jonah doesn't have to cajole or coax, there's no debate at all. Jonah calls out the words of God, and the people of Nineveh believe God.

I suppose there is a difference between catching and trapping.

I spend a lot of time trying to catch my eldest son. He likes to run about and to hide. Under beds, behind curtains, beside the sofa. Anywhere he can scurry off to and feel alone and cheeky. There's a cafe just next door to us, and some time ago, we were in there for a mums-and-kids knitting morning. After the coffee cups were empty and the last toast crumbs and jam smears finally abandoned (and a few rows of knitting accomplished, too), we gathered coats, and I went to the counter to pay. My son sat down on top of my feet for a moment, and then sprang up again. I was looking in my wallet so I didn't see him go, but I found my coins and then glanced over for him. Gone. I looked back over to the other mums, and he wasn't there either. Underneath the table? Nope. Anywhere? Dropped my wallet on the counter and ran out the door. And yes, he had gone home to hide from me behind the hedge. I threw open my arms, and he ran in, giggling.

Caught.

I'd love for him to turn and repent his hiding ways, but he was only three, and that's some work we have to do together. In the meantime, I love that I get to catch him.

(And for the grandmothers reading this, yes, I promise I will keep a hand on him more tightly in the future.)

Catching my daughter doesn't require much running on my part right now. I just need to sit down on the sofa with a book and invite her to do the same. We like cuddling up with our feet under the same blanket and close enough to read the funny bits out loud to each other. Caught.

I think that the fishing and the catching of people to which Jesus calls us is akin to this.

We are to invite people, to gather people in a moment, for a moment, that in that moment we might know God together.

We are to set tables and find stories and throw open our arms to each other.

We are to love. As fishermen and prophets. As lectionarians and parents.

You can't get a better job than that.

Katie Munnik is an Ottawa writer currently living in Edinburgh, Scotland, with her studying husband and three growing children. Each Monday on the Messy Table (found at presbyterianrecord.ca), she writes about the practical theology of parenting, the practice of reading lectionary and the perfection of birthday cakes.

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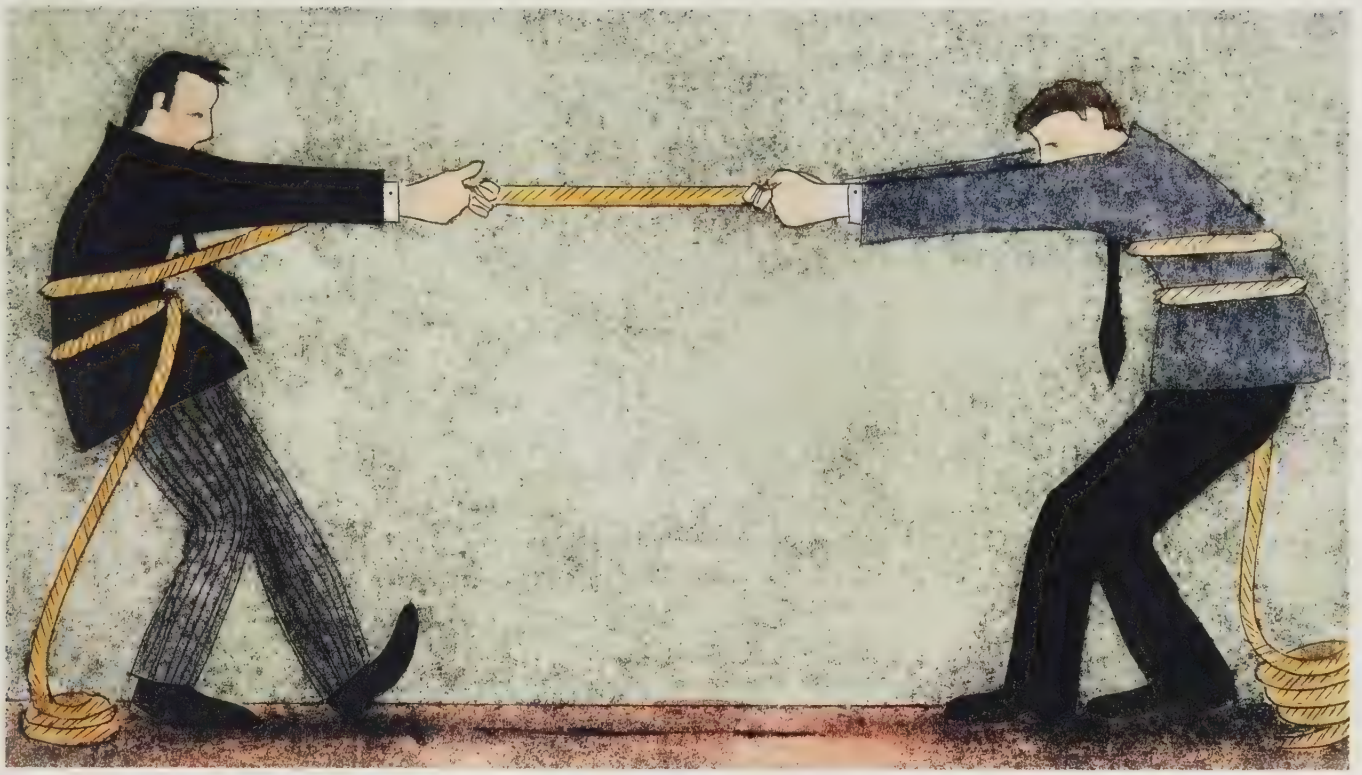


THINKSTOCK

VIEWPOINT

Me First!

Does a church setting attract and foster narcissistic behaviour?

By Glenn Ball

I don't like conflict! But at any time in North America 20 per cent of congregations are in conflict. Knowing I was not going to avoid conflict I started studying it, to learn to recognize it and how to deal with it. With the course work completed, it was time to find a thesis topic. I was conflicted on what to study. A friend responded, "Just tell me the challenges you are facing in the synod ministry." From a page-long rant came, "We have 'the Princes' who believe they are entitled to run around beating up the people in their congregations, and when things explode, as they always do, they cannot comprehend that they have done anything wrong, or why the presbytery is calling them to change their ways, or that they need to change their own pattern of behaviour." His response was, "What you have described here is Narcissistic Personality Disorder!" And so my capstone project for Trinity Seminary, Newburgh, Indiana, was to learn about NPD and the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

As my friend noted, narcissism is a personality disorder. Narcissists believe the world revolves around them. They are exhibitionists who feel they are entitled to the best of everything. They can have explosive tempers. They build up their own contributions and belittle the accomplishments of others. They are actors and thrive in administrative positions where they can hide behind rules and regulations, seeking to avoid dealing with the people and their problems.

In the Bible, narcissists are found in patriarchs, judges, kings, prophets and apostles. Some of them, by the grace of God, were transformed; others are not and end up destroying themselves and their family, church and nation. If we want to see a church grow and thrive ›

Narcissists seek praise, which leads to an inflated ego. They ask, 'What is in it for me?'

we need to know how to recognize them and learn how to deal with them.

Narcissists seek praise, which leads to an inflated ego. They ask, "What is in it for me?" Medicine, the entertainment industry and the military show signs of higher levels of narcissism due to the sense of power and influence that these careers provide. But the ministry can also be an attractive career for a narcissist. There are plenty of possibilities for praise in the ministry. The call process appeals to them because they make a good first impression. Their narcissistic supply is fed by those who tell them "that really spoke to our hearts!" There is a temptation to believe that clergy are God's gift to the local church. Many clergy work alone, without colleagues who are able to help them remain accountable to living the gospel they proclaim.

For my study, surveys were sent to clergy, lay ministers and students for the ministry in the PCC and more than 420 responded. I used the Netherlands Narcissism Scale developed by Hessell Zondag because it measures various narcissistic factors in individuals. Three factors are of interest to leadership in the church: overt narcissism, NPD and covert narcissism. The surveys indicated that there is a serious problem with narcissism in the leadership of the PCC.

Now everyone needs a little bit of this quality for self-preservation and enough confidence in their own ability to be a leader. This can manifest itself in overt narcissism, which is found in approximately 60 per cent of our clergy. This is what enables us to get out of bed Monday morning saying, "So what if I missed the mark yesterday, today is a new day! By the grace of God, I learned something and it is time to face today's challenge!" They exhibit strong leadership skills when coupled with such qualities as creativity, empathy, transience, humour and wisdom. But take away the empathy and the ability to laugh at themselves, and you quickly loose the wisdom. Then leadership degenerates into narcissism in its unredeemable forms.

Likewise, add too much self-centredness and this leads to NPD. Narcissism begins in early adulthood and is present in a variety of contexts, as indicated by five or more of the following nine characteristics: a grandiose sense of importance, fantasies of unlimited success, the belief that they are unique in status, the requirement for excessive admiration, feelings of entitlement to special treatment, taking advantage of others, lack of empathy for others, being envious of others or believing that others are envious of them, and arrogant and haughty behaviour or attitudes. It is revealed among those who think only of themselves as well as

FIGURE 1 NARCISSISM AS MEASURED BY TIME SINCE ORDINATION

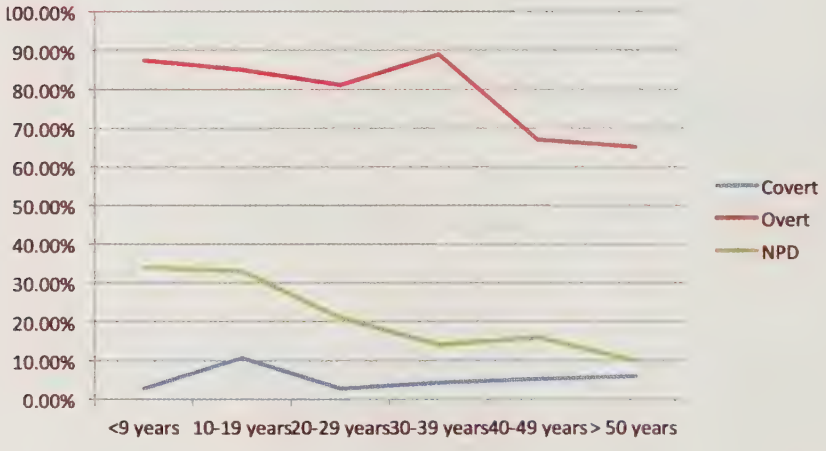


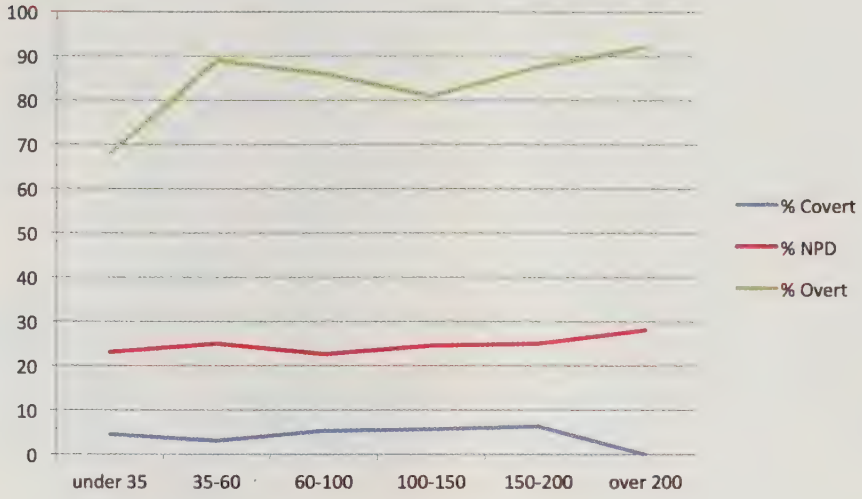
FIGURE 3 PERCENTAGE OF FORMS OF NARCISSISM BY CLASSIFICATIONS OF MINISTRY

in those who are self-deprecating. It is seen also in those who bully their way through life.

This is not good news. These are the people who leave congregations decimated. As one respondent noted, "anyone with high scores in these areas should not be in ministry." Yet 25 per cent of our clergy cross that boundary into the egocentric realm of NPD as opposed to five per cent of the general population. Those with NPD do not learn from their mistakes and will move, on average, one year sooner than other clergy. Because they do not learn from their mistakes a pattern of failed ministry follows them. They are the ones least likely to attend continuing education events or to join a study or accountability group, because they feel they already know everything. They seldom take advice from others, and belittle others' accomplishments as a way to build themselves up.

We also have the covert narcissists who comprise five per cent of all clergy and 25 per cent of those with NPD. They possess the same character traits as NPD but seek to hide these traits. They are intent on shifting the blame for problems onto others. While they seek to be as gentle as doves, they are inclined to have the temperament of dragons. These would be the individuals Jesus called hypocrites; they say one thing and do something else. They can change their attitudes quickly and deny that their own actions affected others. They suffer from low self-esteem or a form of self-loathing. They try to appear as servants, but can show great resentment if they are not honoured as they feel befits their status. The statistical analysis indicates that covert narcissism emerges over time, peeking at 10 per cent of those with 15 years of ministry, while overt narcissism and NPD are at their peek early and decline over time (See Figure 1).

FIGURE 2 PERCENTAGE OF NARCISSISM BY SIZE OF CONGREGATION



Levels of NPD rise with the size of congregations served, while covert narcissism was not found in the larger congregations. The data implies that a covert narcissist either cannot work effectively with a larger congregation or that over time they will reduce the congregation to a level that they can control (Figure 2). Both possibilities can have devastating consequences for the church.

The study also looked at personal spiritual practices. Respondents were asked to place either a high or low value on the regularity of their practices of daily prayer, scripture reading, pastoral care, music, stewardship, etc. The intention was not to dictate an answer but rather to honestly see if there was a spiritual co-relationship with the level of narcissism. Yes, there are connections to spirituality. Narcissists prefer working with paid staff, are the least intentional about congregational visitation, and are less likely to maintain practices of regular prayer and biblical devotional reading.

How do we deal with narcissists? Some of these individuals are not currently in ministry as noted by the levels of NPD found in "Others" on the appendix to the rolls of presbyteries (52 per cent NPD). (See Figure 3).

It helps to know what a narcissist acts like. Pride and vanity are signs of a narcissist. It helps to look at their previous ministries and early life. Those with the lowest levels of narcissism approach life with a desire to learn. They are able to work with volunteers of all ages. They try to maintain daily spiritual practices, and are methodical in their work with all parts of the congregation and seek not to favour any. They know who their mentors are. Narcissists don't feel they need mentors. Narcissists may view any congregation as a stepping stone, not as a mission from God. Listen carefully to what they say about their previous experiences; they will eventually say the same things about you.

Narcissism is the hardest personality disorder to overcome. But by the grace of God all things are possible. The apostle John changed from Son of Thunder to the Beloved servant of God. When conflict happens, the body of Christ is broken. Those at fault must work hard to discover humility and a servant's attitude, and then they can change and grow.

Rev. Dr. R. Glenn Ball is minister at St. Andrew's, Brandon, Man.

BE CHURCH

It's About Hospitality

Making churches safe for people with life-threatening allergies.

By Amy MacLachlan

Two years ago, when my daughter was four years old, she had an allergic reaction at school. Her gym teacher had to jam an epinephrine auto-injector (or epi-pen) into her thigh, right through her clothing, to stop her face from swelling, her tongue from tingling, her skin from itching, and her throat from eventually closing. The ambulance was already at the school when I arrived, and it took us both to the hospital where she was given an I.V. and monitored for the afternoon.

A traumatic experience for a four-year-old. And for her parents.

That day we found out she's allergic to chickpeas (in addition to peanuts). Apparently there's a less than five per cent chance that a peanut allergy will be coupled with a chickpea one, but here we are. We carry epi-pens with us wherever we go. Her father and I are cautious. We're picky. We're downright rude if we have to be.

Most people understand, and usually when we run into problems it's simply a lack of awareness and understanding rather than apathy or defiance.

Our church has been exceptional in its efforts to make things safe for my daughter (and anyone else who might walk through their doors with an allergy). But it turns out, if a congregation hasn't had any kids with severe allergies in their church, they might have no allergy policy at all. That can be a real problem for

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new people, especially if they have kids.

According to Anaphylaxis Canada, about 300,000 Canadians under the age of 18 have food allergies. That climbs to 2.5 million when looking at the entire population. And about two in every 100 children are allergic to peanuts. Chances are, if your church doesn't yet have someone with a food allergy, it will one day.

"Table fellowship was essential to Christ's ministry, and 2,000 years later it maintains its potency," said Rev. Jacqui Foxall, associate minister at Knox, Oakville, Ont., where we are members. "Whether gathered around the communion table, a potluck, the refreshment nook at coffee time, serving at a food shelter, or making a messy VBS snack, gathering together with others is one of the ways God spiritually sustains and nourishes the community of faith. It is a gift of God, it is an act of service to others, and it is grounded in hospitality.

"As we've become increasingly aware of peoples' allergies and dietary intolerances at Knox, we have begun to change our practices and policies to ensure that *all* are welcome to participate, worry-free, in our table fellowship," said Foxall.

This has meant rules around snacks at coffee time, and not allowing food in the nursery and toddler rooms. Events like funeral receptions boast separate gluten-free spreads for those who require them.

The PCC's Leading with Care policy, put into practice in 2005, sets out requirements for all churches on how to serve and protect vulnerable children and adults. Its section on allergies is short, but a good starting point:

"When children/youth/vulnerable adults register for a program, inquire about allergies. Post this information so that it will not be overlooked. If your program serves meals or snacks, post the menu so the parent/caretaker can see it. Avoid foods identified as serious allergens such as peanut butter, chocolate and nuts of any kind. Popcorn can be dangerous for young children."

And there are some churches—and camps especially—that are doing things right.

At Camp Keir, on Prince Edward Island, for example, handling food allergies is simply another precaution taken to keep campers safe. They can be as young as six, away at overnight camp for the first time.

Amelia Campbell, chair of both the public relations and program committees, goes the extra mile when a child at camp has an anaphylactic allergy.

"Five years ago we had a child who was severely allergic to peanut butter, so I went through everything in the camp and made sure that nothing contained any kind of peanut or by-products. Then I double-checked everything to make sure there was no trace of nuts. I personally contacted every child coming that week and talked to their parents and let them know not to bring food; we have a policy to have no food brought in. And I asked them not to feed their kids peanut butter that day. Once the child was here, they had their epi-pens at camp; anywhere they went, they had an epi-pen with them."

Campbell said it helps that schools on the island have been peanut-free for more than 20 years and parents are very supportive of the precautions.

"We have people in our church who have allergies, too," said Campbell, who is an elder at Wellspring, King's County. "We have one girl who even if she touches strawberries will have a reaction." Others are allergic to dairy, gluten and even red food dye, while others can't tolerate perfumes.

"It's a matter of being proactive, open to learning and putting safety first. You learn to be adaptable. It's better to be ›

TOP 10 TIPS TO MAKE YOUR CHURCH ALLERGY-AWARE:

1. Have children in Sunday school or at special events fill out a registration form with medical and allergy information. Ensure all leaders know of existing conditions.
2. Know who the child's parents are and if they carry an epi-pen.
3. Consider stocking an epi-pen in the church office. One epi-pen is about $100, lasts for a year, and is available without a prescription.
4. Post allergy notices in kitchens and common areas, noting that foods with peanuts (and other foods, where applicable) are not allowed.
5. Include regular notices in the Sunday bulletin, church newsletter, etc., explaining the policy.
6. At coffee hour or other gatherings where food is being served, serve only allergy-friendly foods (remember to check for "may contain" warnings on packaging), and have packages nearby so concerned parents can double-check ingredients.
7. If someone wants to bring food into the building for a special occasion (such as a cake for a baptism), remind them of the policy.
8. Have any volunteers or staff who will be working with children or with food preparation or service watch a video or attend an info session about food allergies.
9. Remember that crafts and other activities may contain common allergens.
10. Remind elders and other leaders that this is a pastoral response, undertaken out of love for others, and as a means of nurturing community.

BE CHURCH, continued

'Theologically speaking, it's about the concept of being welcoming to the whole person for who they are'

too cautious than not cautious enough."

For Meghan Adrian, children's ministries director at Coquitlam Presbyterian in B.C., being allergy-aware comes with having a preschool operating in the church building.

"It's not just about eating," she said. "There are other ways they might come in contact." Even crafts and activities at Sunday school need to be considered. Someone with a severe wheat allergy, for example, might not be able to touch Play-Doh, while something like a bird feeder craft could be problematic depending on the ingredients used.

"I have seen a little girl go into anaphylactic shock at the playground from picking up a cheese wrapper off the ground," said Adrian. "You don't forget a thing like that."

So why is this particularly important for churches?

"Part of our mandate is to reach out to all people. And if there's any kind of physical barrier, be aware of it and as much as possible remove it," said Adrian.

Rev. Rebecca Simpson, director of Camp Douglas in Roberts Creek, B.C., and minister at St. Paul's, Mission, B.C., was a teacher before working for the church. She said schools are generally ahead of the church on this issue.

"Practically speaking, the church needs to pay attention to what the parenting landscape is. All of this is already well in hand in the school environment. So it's very disturbing for parents to come to another social environment and discover that they're not on board. It makes the church feel archaic in terms of an institution," said Simpson. "We're not meant to be of this world, but if the world is doing a better job of ensuring the safety of children, it makes us look bad as the church.

"Theologically speaking, it's about the concept of being welcoming to the whole person for who they are. Why do we serve juice in communion? Why do we provide gluten-free choices during communion? To me, it's a modern day issue of hospitality."

Rev. Tim Archibald at King's, New Minas, N.S., began working on the nut-free issue even before the church's Leading with Care policy was adopted. A girl with severe allergies—where she could have a reaction if she was simply in the same room as the offending food—prompted the response to become a nut-free church.

"It was a pastoral response to that one person," said Archibald. "It has grown out of being a community and trying to serve one another and to serve by being flexible and aiming to include others as best we can."

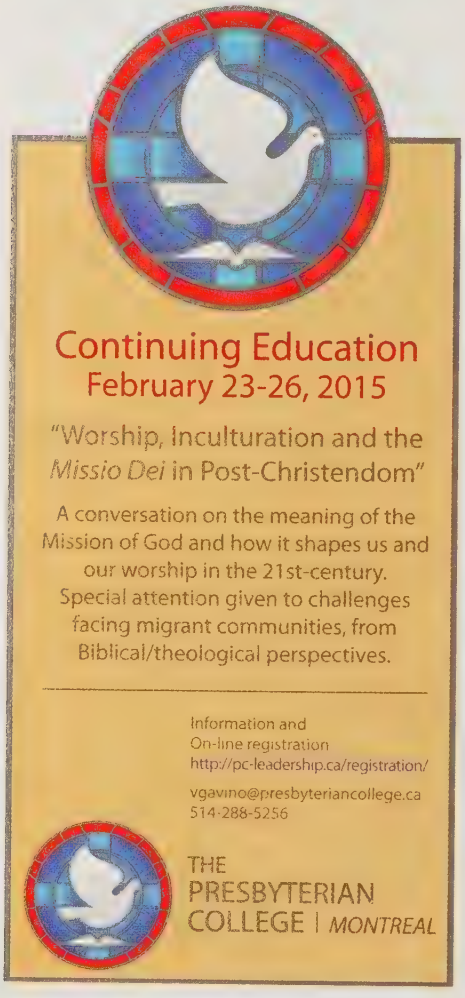
Since then, they have grown to become a scent-free congregation as well, prompted by a couple of people who are allergic to perfumes.

"Christian faith is formed in community," said Archibald. "The grace and love of God that we experience ourselves is then meant to flow through us out to others. Letting go of using nuts and perfume in our church is just part of the spiritual practice of humility and learning to put others' needs before our own—the hallmark of the Christian love that we profess. Such personal flexibility also helps us as we practice the art of letting go of our own wills in order to follow God's will."

Children with life-threatening allergies face many situations—birthdays, potlucks, Halloween, even eating out at restaurants—where their allergies can be a barrier to both their physical and emotional wellbeing. Surely the church is one place where they can feel welcomed and accepted, participating fully in all of the congregation's activities and celebrations.

My daughter, and the thousands like her, will thank you for your efforts.

Amy MacLachlan is the Record's *managing editor.*



Focus

Stories of mission, ministry and community

MISSION

Make Straight the Crooked Places

Three Okanagan churches invite Hummingbird Ministries to share stories.

By Teresa Charlton

Taking up the challenge by our denomination's national offices to broaden and deepen our understanding of the First Nations communities in our country, and strengthen efforts towards healing and reconciliation, three churches of the North Okanagan region of British Columbia invited Hummingbird Ministries (an outreach ministry in the Presbytery of Westminster dedicated to the work of reconciliation and healing) to participate in a 10-day tour of the area.

It was an exciting opportunity to share stories between First Nations and non-First Nations communities; exciting, yet daunting, as expressed by Rev. Woldy Sosnowsky of St. Andrew's, Salmon Arm: "Truth and ›

MISSION, continued

Discovering the culture and traditions of Canada's First Nations at Knox, Vernon, B.C.

Despite much healing work within the church and government agencies, the elders from Hummingbird continue to encounter individuals with difficult stories to share

reconciliation is not an easy task."

Despite much healing work within the church and government agencies, the elders from Hummingbird continue to encounter individuals with difficult stories to share, filled with pain and loss. Yet, in that sharing, a glimmer of healing appears, and an inching forward of trust between local First Nations bands and the church. Rev. Wendy Adams, minister at St. Andrew's, Armstrong, discovered that following the tour, she had gained a desire to honour the new relationships established with the local First Nations people of her community, and has been welcomed to other events.

Knox, Vernon, where I am the minister, chose the arts to spark dialogue between First Nations and non-First Nations people of the city. Music and drama were used by the Hummingbird elders to engage school children and seniors. The trading of well-worn moccasins for a pair of slippers ensured a timeless friendship between one elder from Hummingbird and a senior from a local retirement residence. In creating an interactive workshop for the community, Knox transformed its lobby into an art gallery, displaying original paintings, prints, beadwork, clothing and carvings from a wide variety of First Nations peoples across Canada. As the Knox congregation brought in their art treasures for display, they discovered how diverse was the collection, and how many stories there were to be shared about the origin of the art. In the storytelling, the congregation of Knox came to realize the similarities in their life stories, and a greater appreciation of the interconnectedness of all people.

Upon reflection, I couldn't help but think of the Advent hymn:

There's a voice in the wilderness crying,
A call from the ways untrod;
Prepare in the desert a highway for our God!
The valleys shall be exalted, the lofty hills brought low;
Make straight all the crooked places where the Lord our God may go!

Through the sharing of food, stories and artistic expressions, I would like to think that a new conversation was begun in the North Okanagan; perhaps a straightening of a crooked place, and the promise of richer sharing in the future.

Rev. Teresa Charlton is minister at Knox, Vernon, B.C.

PHOTOS BY TERESA CHARLTON.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SABINE TEETZEL.

REFLECTION

Patience is a Virtue

When God says 'not yet.' By the St. Andrew's Search Committee

January 1, 2014 was not just any New Year's Day for St. Andrew's, Victoria; it was the start of our existence without a minister of our very own. Our lead minister had retired in June 2013 and our assistant minister accepted a call elsewhere starting in January 2014. In addition, our longtime music director had recently retired due to ill health and our new music director (organist) had just arrived and broke her arm. What was going on?

Rev. Dr. Ian Victor had announced to the congregation in the fall of 2011 that he was going to retire in June of 2013. We had lots of time for congregational meetings and surveys. By the fall of 2012 we had a comprehensive congregational profile that included our vision for 2016. We had an interim moderator appointed in January of 2013. We had the future all planned out to the last detail. St. Andrew's would neatly glide into the strong, guiding presence of a new minister.

Surprise! We were mistaken.

We thought we had all the bases covered. But, to quote Robbie Burns, "The best laid schemes o' mice an' men / Gang aft agley." Here we were, January 2014, with no minister and no prospective minister in sight. Didn't God approve of our plans? What were we missing?

We were very fortunate to have an interim moderator and stated supply minister who both reminded our congregation that we should earnestly enter into a season of prayer for St. Andrew's and for the minister whom God was preparing for us. We needed to listen and hear the voice of God. We needed to be patient and trust in God.

As we all prayed for St. Andrew's, something happened. Do we have a new minister? Well, no. But, through prayer we began to live our vision. We became more welcoming. We are a congregation that now ›

has young adults gathering to worship and serve. Some young families have joined us as well. We gather together for birthdays, graduations, congregational events, monthly lunches, talent shows—the list goes on. Friends are invited and some come back to visit and stay. We have been faithful in serving breakfasts for the needy and new members have joined the team. We have gathered kilos and kilos of oatmeal for a street mission.

During the summer we had an open church every Wednesday, which brought in tourists and locals alike. We are continuing this program through the winter on a monthly basis. Our annual downtown carol sing is now promoted by the Downtown Victoria Business Association. St. Andrew's choir has grown and we now have a fledgling children's choir.

How has this happened?

We have been learning to wait, to listen carefully to God and to reach out to each other. Yes, we would have liked a minister yesterday; but, God in His wisdom has given us wings and confidence to grow and take responsibility for ourselves and for our vision.

Has it been easy? In a word, no. We have faced challenges; we have thought we found the right candidates but it was not to be. We felt disheartened and we asked the question "what are we doing wrong?" As we talked we looked at the past and the present, we saw what we were achieving and what we were not. We recognize the new faces among us and we are moving toward our vision.

God, are we ready now? We are waiting for a minister to be our pastoral guide, a teacher of the word, to help us develop new programs to reach out to our downtown community and minister to us all. We are listening.

The search committee at St. Andrew's, Victoria, is composed of eight members representing various demographics from within the church.

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Divine Diversity

Seeing Christ in everyone.

By Bonnie Beldan-Thomson

The wind sent clouds scudding across the sun and tousled branches as it nudged parishioners into the church one March morning. But after the service a good number went out to the parking lot for a car blessing. Rodney and Subrina had a new vehicle and, in their Trinidadian tradition, we prayed over it, thanking God and asking for blessing on the vehicle and all those who rode in it. After all, the Spirit, like the wind, was with us, waiting to fill and bless.

While we prayed, I thought of my 15-year-old Chevy Celebrity. I wondered how long I ›

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The common bond of Presbyterianism may bring diverse people together but it does not ensure a homogeneous group

could drive it before being seriously let down. Soon we gathered around it, asking God to keep me safe and show me clearly when I should let it go. Sure enough, several weeks later, my car refused to start. Nothing worked. But just before I called for help, I gave it one more try. It started and I drove home without any further problems, thanking God for the signal we had requested.

My favourite tradition in our multi-cultural church is that of prayer meetings. These are actually services with singing, scripture reading, prayer, opportunities for people to speak and a short message from the minister. These meetings are requested because they express the deeply-felt prayers of peoples' hearts. They may take place 40 days after a death or on the annual anniversary of a death but are also used to celebrate a special birthday, anniversary or other happy event. Usually a prayer meeting is held in someone's house although it may also be in the church sanctuary.

One family has a prayer meeting of thanksgiving every second June. Rows of chairs fill the space between the back of their bungalow and a large maple tree where squirrels play tag. The sound of traffic two streets over is like the white noise of ocean waves. I play keyboard from the deck, the minister sits at a table on the grass in front of the first row of chairs. Just before we start, a neighbour rushes in with apologies; she had unexpected company. Everyone smiles and nods. Then worship begins.

During the meal afterwards several ladies and one teenage man pull chairs up to the minister's table. Doris explains to me that the beans we are eating are called pigeon peas. She cooks them to make a light curry or chicken stew or with rice for pelau. On top she might use pimento, a pepper with a hot smell that does not taste hot. She says people back home often grow pigeon peas in their gardens. Last fall when she was there she bought a bag of them from a neighbour.

"But it was expensive," she says. "Fifteen dollars, and by the time I shelled them I just had a small bowl."

"Most people now buy them in cans," adds Amrita, from across the table.

"That's right," someone else says. "But do you remember when they used to grow so much of them at the place where the road divided ..."

Soft accents become more pronounced as others chime in,

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remembering people, places and experiences. I sit silently, feeling as if I'm on vacation, listening in on life in another place.

How does it happen that these worlds, theirs and mine, come together, meld, form something that is both and neither? A new work in Christ.

Immigrants who have a background in the Christian church of their homelands have a common bond with Christians here and usually search out church affiliation that provides some continuity with their previous experience. For example, Malvern, Toronto, has a Presbyterian minister's son from the Philippines and several families from Trinidad and Guyana who came to faith through Presbyterian churches established by missionaries there. Many of them were educated in schools that were a product of this missionary movement and some taught in these schools before immigrating to Canada.

The common bond of Presbyterianism may bring diverse people together but it does not ensure a homogeneous group. For example, Canadian children are encouraged to socialize and explore as part of the learning process. Children from other cultures, where classes are larger and educational materials are less plentiful, may be used to highly structured classes which include rote learning.

Basic concepts, such as sense of time, can vary as well. Promptness is a sign of respect, responsibility and proper order for many Presbyterians of Anglo-Saxon descent. Other cultures may place more importance on the enjoyment of an event and the integration of it with other values such as socializing and maintaining a relaxed "take things as they come" approach to life. Also, waiting for a bus and walking in all kinds of weather are quite different from driving to church in one's own car. The issue of arriving for church at a given time has potential for being either a point of conflict or a chance to see a situation through the eyes of another: an irritant or an opportunity for grace.

A truly diverse church will be led and served by a session whose composition accurately represents that of the congregation

Time can be a challenge in terms of personality as well as culture. For some, the Sunday morning service is an hour a week where the liturgy, sermon length and time of the final hymn are predictable. And this predictability matters. If the service carries on an extra five, 10 or, heaven forbid, 15 minutes, someone needs to be spoken to in order to correct the situation. If music strays into gospel, jazz, contemporary or world music, an observation, or perhaps a complaint, needs to be registered. However, for others, Sunday morning is a time to come together to worship the Lord, regardless of how long it takes. If they are blessed by extra music or a longer message from God's word, so be it; they go home later, content with the extra blessing.

Other differences matter less. With practice and a measure of God's grace, cashmere sweater sets and pearls can enjoy the bling of rhinestones on chiffon and colourful African prints on both men and women. The haggis and turnip of Robbie Burns night may be replaced by the cook-up rice, noodles and curried goat of Carnival where children parade in costumes and do the limbo. Later, Carnival may evolve into an international dinner.

The hardest part of making diversity work has to do with the sharing of power. A truly diverse church will be led and served by a session whose composition accurately represents that of the congregation. Jesus began this tradition when he called fishermen and tax collectors. It continues today by his Spirit whenever his people obey scriptural injunctions: "I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think" (Romans 12:3); "Live in harmony with one another" (Romans 12:16); "... with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:2-3).

In the final analysis, the interest and challenge of ethnic and cultural factors, or lack of them, matter less than our bond with the Christ who is all and in all (Colossians 3:11).

Bonnie Beldan-Thomson is a freelance writer and a member at Malvern, Toronto. You can visit her online at bonniebeldanthomson.wordpress.com.

CAN WE TALK?

On whether Presbyterians can debate and discuss in a spirit of respect, kindness and hope.

With Andrew Faiz, Iona MacLean and John Carr
Illustration by Katy Lemay

We like to think we're reasonable people who can work out our differences amicably. But ... it seems in recent years, to many in the denomination, that differences aren't truly worked out—and certainly not amicably.

The *Record*'s Andrew Faiz met with Revs. Iona MacLean and John Carr on Skype one morning to discuss this. Carr began by laying out the concern. ›

One of my mentors was opposed to the ordination of women. But he said, 'My church has spoken. I must obey'

JOHN: We seem not to be able to discuss issues and particularly hot button issues in the Presbyterian Church anymore without people getting pretty huffy and abandoning the sandbox. "If you're not going to play the way I want you to play, I'm going to leave," sort of thing. That's particularly disturbing to me as someone who has valued over the years our ability to disagree even passionately but still be committed to the decisions which we make as a body.

IONA: At my first General Assembly in 1980 we were dealing with liberty of conscience. I'm not sure that there wasn't that kind of polarization 35 years ago. But I think partly the means of communication have changed so it's easier to get into an argument than it was before. I'm not sure that we're very much worse at trying to reach consensus just given my experience in my early years.

ANDREW: Polarization versus demonization. It seems to me that those are two distinctions we need to hold.

JOHN: One of my mentors was opposed to the ordination of women. But he said, "My church has spoken. I must obey." And he was very intentional about having women in the pulpit when he was away on vacation or on assembly business and ensured that female elders were elected to the session of the church he served. That's a spirit that one doesn't see often.

IONA: That's interesting. I think that's right. There was the ability to disagree but in terms of faithfulness to the church and to the process by which decisions are made, there was the willingness to move on. I think there was a sense of commitment and I wouldn't say it was to the institution. I would say it was to the community of faith and I mean that's really what the liberty of conscience discussion was about—whether you were allowed to think differently but you were not in the end allowed to act differently once the church had spoken. Your mentor certainly exemplifies that kind of faithfulness to the way the church seeks the guidance of the Spirit.

JOHN: That's what happens when marriages go awry. The focus is more on what's driving the partners apart than on what brought them together in the first place. And often when I'm doing marriage therapy, simply getting back to what brought them together helps to dissipate some of the passion around that which is driving them apart.

ANDREW: Facebook is a fascinating social dynamic in which everybody has their own broadcasting station that is used to tell their story on their terms. So whether that story is as banal as what I had for breakfast or as seemingly interesting as my political observations or my observations about society at large, my experiences are all equally important, there's no relative hierarchy to them and here they are presented to you whole on a regular basis.

JOHN: In the Reformed tradition there is a truth to the idea we are thinking our way as faithful people, but we're always only on the way. From my perspective that's almost postmodernism. But there are many who come out of our theological colleges and have done in the last decade and a half or so—that I've observed anyway—who for some reason don't really get that. So the truth that they've come to at that moment in time is the truth.

IONA: Partly it's the speed with which we're trying to have the conversation in the technological way and I saw that in some of the comments I've read from online discussions. Some were trying very hard to be firm in their opinion but respectful and open and others sent it too quickly, I think, because there was that kind of edgy attitude which then makes it difficult.

ANDREW: John, what do you mean by postmodernism? I think it strikes fear in many church hearts.

JOHN: Well, what most postmodernists mean is that there is really no ultimate truth, that everything is up for grabs; that as my philosophy professor probably around 1958 said, pointing to a chair in the middle of the room, "That isn't a chair." It was a course in epistemology. But I think it's possible to be a Christian postmodernist with a

traditional Reformed and always reforming position. Even though that's one of our mantras in the PCC, we seldom bring it to consciousness in my opinion.

ANDREW: I think that's being very generous when you say we seldom bring it to consciousness.

IONA: Well, I think we do better than we sometimes realize. You know, I've been to a lot of GAs. Not always as a commissioner but I've certainly seen a lot of debates and participated in many of them. For the most part, I am struck by how much respect and hope there is that the Spirit is working through those kinds of discussions. I think for the most part people are well meaning in the ways they participate in those discussions.

But I think there is in our church and other areas of life, where some people just think that truth can be grasped completely by any of us at this point and therefore stake their ground and that's all there is to it. I think in political terms sometimes advocacy groups are dismissed as special interest groups as if they counter what the prevailing government position happens to be.

I think a little humility is part of this postmodern movement, realizing that we are not able to grasp the whole picture and therefore we each have something to contribute. But there is also a process and a structure by which we do that in the church and maybe that needs to change. That's part of reforming as well. But I don't think it's all bad. I don't think it's all—I don't think we're doing it all wrong.

JOHN: At the '96 assembly which overturned the decision of the Presbytery of Montreal to ordain and induct Darryl MacDonald at St. Andrew's, Lachine, there was a lot of passion but I didn't hear a lot of bitterness. The conversation that I had after the vote with a young Korean minister raises another piece of this discussion. I'm keenly aware that as a minister whose ministry has largely been outside of congregational ministries I haven't had to worry about what my congregation might think about what I choose to do in the course of the church and what I choose to say. But this young man voted as I did to support the action of the Presbytery of Montreal, which as a Korean minister serving a very conservative Korean congregation was undoubtedly going to cost him.

So there's also the question of how those of us who have positions of leadership try to be at the leading edge of that reform modus, reform mundus principle but need to do so in a way that's respectful of the fact that it sometimes, probably inevitably, takes congregations a while to catch up with those kinds of leading edge pieces. And I know there were several other people who came up to me and said that they would have voted as I did, except that they didn't think the congregations of the church were ready.

IONA: I was struck at that assembly by the young adult representatives who in their presentation did a kind of serious debate and voted to uphold the decision of Montreal. And I think that taught the assembly generally that there was more conversation to be had as the newer generation was helping us to think through a difficult situation. ›

ANDREW: There is a high level of anxiety on so many issues—pews are emptier each year, as are coffers. Everybody's struggling for people and for money. Everybody's struggling for a sense of identity that is shifting. Presbyterianism had a certain identity up until maybe mid-century, perhaps even until the mid-70s, but we can't with any confidence say that it is a Scottish church in Canada anymore. Are we just dealing with so much anxiety and the way we express anxiety is through almost belligerent certitude?

IONA: I think that's really interesting, Andrew, because I think you've got something there. I think anxiety is a huge presence and, you know, we are a people of hope. So how do we take that identity and apply it to that sort of level of anxiety? I don't know what the answer is exactly. As a preacher I try to keep the message that way, that God has things for us beyond our imagining. *Living Faith* comes in handy sometimes with those kinds of very good statements. And maybe what as leaders we have to do is to remind people of that and to help us all get over that anxiety because I think when we are scared, yes, that's when we dig in our heels.

JOHN: And certainly the big box churches tend to take advantage of that ordinary human frailty—instead of letting anxiety inform us, we allow it to control us.

IONA: Historically our denomination has had conversations in the courts; that's the way we governed and made decisions and sessions would send representative elders so that in some way the congregations would be involved. Maybe it's just me but I always think better and learn more and discuss better with people when I'm face to face.

So having conversations where you actually engage with people, I think, is helpful whether it's at the congregational level or the presbytery level. Doesn't have to be within the formal court system but somehow getting people to listen to one another in groups.

JOHN: I affirm what Iona has said. I suppose one of the biggest conundrums we face going forward is how to live the genius of the Presbyterian way of doing things in a way that recognizes the changes that are occurring and the way in which society is processing the things that need to be processed.

ANDREW: There is the sense of separation in a lot of congregations between the session and non-session members. The lack of connection to presbytery; a lot of people in the pews are simply not aware of our polity. Our polity, our government, is a really complicated thing and especially a lot of new Christians or a lot of new Presbyterians simply are not aware of how the thing works. It's not bred into the bone.

JOHN: And people bring assumptions from other traditions. We have a lot of African folk from Cameroon and South Africa and some folks from Southeast Asia and they bring different understandings of the way Presbyterianism operates than that which is the norm in Edmonton. So our session is trying to bring together all of these traditions in a way that honours the best in each of them.

IONA: It may be that fear factor again, the anxiety, because it takes time to reform thoughtfully and carefully. I'm in a conversation with a charge in our presbytery which is trying to figure out its future and there's a tendency to say we need it fixed now. And that means an instant decision is not necessarily going to be the best or most faithful decision but you understand where that comes from when there's a kind of panic that goes on.

Reforming is hard. Imagining new things is hard, especially for those of us who've been around a long time. Sometimes, there needs to be some kind of change but how do we change so that we don't throw everything that's of value but evolve in some new way that is meaningful to people who haven't had that same rootedness in the tradition?

I think it would be helpful if, however the conversations are taking place, we remember who we are and that we are part of the body of Christ and that no one side has all the truth. I just think respect and an atmosphere of hope for our denomination, diminishing the negativity, would be helpful in any of these kinds of conversations.

Rev. John Carr is (mostly) retired after five decades of professional practice as a minister, pastoral psychotherapist, and clinical pastoral educator.

Rev. Iona MacLean was the first ordained woman in the Synod of the Atlantic Provinces. She is minister at First, Pictou, N.S.

Andrew Faiz is the Record's *senior editor.*

A Lot of Junk

We dance around the issue to avoid confrontation. By Bradley Childs

This particular logical fallacy is called the "No Real Scotsman Fallacy." It goes like this:

Person A: "No Scotsman puts sugar in his tea."

Person B: "I'm a Scotsman and I put sugar in my tea."

Person A: "Well ... No real Scotsman puts sugar in his tea."

Rather than address the issue at hand, or admit a flaw in logic, Person A, after being blatantly proven wrong, simply dismisses the whole debate by re-categorizing the argument.

This is just one example of the kind of terrible logic I've seen lately on Facebook as Presbyterians "discuss" a recent overture to General Assembly. The conversations have generally been cordial. Some of the theology from both sides has been more than a little questionable. One person in particular essentially stated that the Bible was just plain wrong about an issue, and that we now know better.

My interest has been in the way in which people have engaged (or rather avoided engaging) the issues

For my part, I haven't really been all that concerned with what side a person takes. My interest has been in the way in which people have engaged (or rather avoided engaging) the issues. And so occasionally I have poked my head up just long enough to point out some of the more obvious logical fallacies being employed. Surprise, surprise, people don't like that. But my point is pretty clear: We don't like confrontation, so we spend all of our energy dancing around the issues with emotionalism and ridiculously flawed arguments.

We have a lot of difficulty discussing complicated issues for numerous reasons. For one, the world of communication has changed so rapidly that people are just struggling to figure out how to work with things like Facebook and email. The social etiquette for these things are still being sussed out and it is easier to treat people as if they are disembodied entities if you don't have to look them in the face while you interact with them. It is also incredibly easy to just type out the first thing that comes to mind without really taking the time to think it through. For these and other reasons, many people tend to avoid important discussions altogether.

Social media can also be very helpful for fostering conversation. Facebook is a wonderful example of new technology that allows everyone a voice. While many might avoid the hard discussions, many others find social media to be a great way to join in the kinds of conversations that they deem most important. And that is wonderful. It's good for everyone to have a voice. I'm all for mutuality; however, that does not mean to assume that just because everyone deserves to be heard that all voices hold equal weight. That is not the case. In fact very few people as I have seen actually discuss (rather than debate) the issues (rather than dance around them).

From what I've seen lately from Presbyterians discussing some difficult questions, I think we are doing some things right. We are for the most part quite respectful. And I think we are passionate about trying to do what we believe God is leading us to do. But our discussions are also very flawed. We avoid topics of controversy until we feel forced to look at them. When we do join in, we do so impersonally and often without thought, having already made up our minds. Then we say a lot of junk in order to avoid saying anything at all. When we make poor arguments we arrogantly refuse to acknowledge our errors. We assume that if someone sees errors in our thought process that they are our enemy. We assume that people on the other side of the fence are not only wrong but less intelligent or, worse yet, not true Scotsmen (or not true Christians).

Surely we can do better.

Rev. Bradley Childs is minister at First, Regina, and author of the Record*'s monthly column, The Other Six Days.*

FROM THE MODERATOR

We Pray for the Same Things

Reflecting in Jerusalem. By Stephen Farris

As I write this, I look east over the hills of Jerusalem. It is a Monday morning and yesterday was the first Sunday in Advent. I raise an eyebrow at pronouncements from Canadians who have been in this country for a week and anoint themselves instant experts on complex issues. This will not, therefore, be about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict beyond saying that it's complicated. It will instead be a few snapshots of my time here.

The first is your Moderator praying at the Western or "Wailing" Wall. The wall is not a remnant of the Temple itself but rather massive stones, laid in place at the will of King Herod, that are the remains of the vast podium on which the Temple once stood. As such, it is inexpressibly holy to Jews. From the rear of the plaza, one can see reaching above the wall the tip of the golden dome of the mosque which covers the place where, according to both Muslim and Jewish tradition, Abraham was willing to sacrifice his beloved son, Ishmael to one faith and Isaac to the other. From here, in Islamic teaching, the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven. As such, it is inexpressibly holy to Muslims. Above the holy places, in the clear sky of the early winter, shone a first quarter moon.

Earlier, I had visited a Christian holy place, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. By tradition, the church covers both Golgotha, the place of crucifixion, and the nearby tomb where Jesus was laid. I sit loose to such traditions, but the

Abraham was willing to sacrifice his beloved son, Ishmael to one faith and Isaac to the other

location does fit the description in the gospels and Christians have remembered the death and resurrection of Jesus in that place for at least 17 centuries. At the Golgotha end of the church, it is possible to kneel and reach through a hole in the floor to touch the bedrock of the hill itself. The hole is a suitable dimension for people of average size. I reached through, with difficulty, touched the rock and then, for a moment, could not withdraw my arm. I could imagine the janitor cutting away the floor to extricate one jumbo-sized Moderator. Not, perhaps, the holiest of pictures.

We had also visited Yad Vashem, memorial to the Holocaust of the Jews of Europe under the Nazis. It was difficult for me, as it should be. For my wife, Patty, a mother and grandmother, who spent her professional career educating and caring for children, the memorial to a million and quarter children murdered was all but unbearable. In the darkness of the memorial it seemed there were a multitude of lights reflecting into infinity, each a child lost, and generations to come lost as well.

At the Western Wall, there is a place of prayer for men and a separate area for women. Their house, their rules. As we approached the place of Jewish prayer, the call to prayer echoed loudly from the mosques of the Arab city. Amidst the Jewish men, each head covered with a variety of headgear, I stood before the wall, quite obviously Gentile, but welcome to pray. A Tilley hat was sufficient covering. I laid my hand on the wall, which was warm from the winter sun. I gave thanks that I was there and prayed for my family, for health, for many things. I do not think my prayers were very different from the prayers of the Jews around me or the Muslims in their mosques. Patty told me later that around her, Jewish women held their precious children in their arms as they, too prayed.

I also prayed for the Presbyterian Church and for a just peace. For to me, peace is inexpressibly holy.

Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris is dean of St. Andrew's Hall at the Vancouver School of Theology.

WESLEY BATES/3INABOX

NATIONAL MILITARY CEMETERY, OTTAWA
Princess Anne and her husband Sir Timothy Laurence visited Canada during the week of Remembrance Day. In addition to laying a wreath at the National Military Cemetery in Ottawa, they toured a field of honour with retired brigadier-general David Kettle, pictured here walking with Sir Timothy behind Princess Anne. Kettle is a Presbyterian padre and the secretary general of the Canadian Agency of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

People & Places

Find more online at presbyterianrecord.ca

Photographs can be uploaded at presbyterianrecord.ca.

ST. ANDREW'S, SASKATOON
C.P. Hwang (centre) served as an elder for more than 35 years. In true PCC fashion, the session celebrated his well-deserved retirement with cake. Pictured here are his wife, Hui Bi Hwang, Rev. Amanda Currie, and Leslie Ruo, a friend and fellow elder.

ST. ANDREW'S, LINDSAY, ONT.
Helen Lawrence (centre) was delighted to cut the cake alongside Revs. Robert Quick and Linda Park as the congregation celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Daughters of St. Andrew's. Lawrence is a charter member of the women's group.

THE OTHER SIX DAYS

Online Oddities

Christian media, education and ... Dr. Seuss. By Bradley Childs

CHANNEL / BLOG

Say Goodnight Kevin is both a YouTube channel and a blog. It is most popular for the show, *Nostalgia Christian* in which an awkward, ex-homeschooled 20-something looks at overtly evangelical relics of the 1980s (his childhood and mine).

My favourite one by far is about a bad cartoon we watched at Sunday school when the teacher forgot to prepare a lesson. It was called *McGee and Me.* In it, an animated character nobody could see interacted with a little boy to help him learn life lessons.

Now if that's not your era, don't worry, as most of his fans are younger than yours truly. I'm sure people with a few more years on them might like it, too. All you need to be is a little odd and willing to "judge Christian media by the same criteria as any other media." Hey, that sounds like somebody I know. And if that's not your particular cup of tea then check out Kevin's other shows. There's a great one entitled, *How to Get an Ex-Girlfriend.* New videos are posted each Friday.

FIND IT @ youtube.com. Search for "Say Goodnight Kevin."

"Say Goodnight Kevin."

FREE EDUCATION

Princeton Theological Seminary has it. Harvard has it, too... just about everybody has it these days. It's free post-secondary education and it's done in different ways for different purposes all around the world. Princeton, for example, has a six-week course load you can sign up for in advance and even earn a certificate for your work. Don't get too excited though because it's already full up until 2016.

But Yale also has a good offer. If you don't need a piece of paper to prove you learned something, you can just watch the lectures and read the course material. Right now there is a course entitled, Introduction to New Testament History and Literature taught by Dr. Dale B. Martin. The Greco-Roman world and Judaism in the first century are wonderfully done and contain good and relevant information for ministers and laity alike.

What you do with all this new information, well, I suppose that's up to you, as the new students of Yale.

FIND IT @ oyc.yale.edu.

SEUSSCHARIST

Thought you'd seen it all? Think again! A while back I wrote about a project that was attempting to write the Anglican Eucharist service in Dr. Seuss-type language. Some labelled it silly, others said it was "idolatries."

Want to see it? Lucky for you, it's on YouTube. See, Rev. Ralph Blackman filmed the event almost like an advertisement for the church. In the clip, Blackman is dressed up in a full Cat in the Hat outfit, driving a remote-controlled car down to the front of the church where he meets two kids dressed as Thing One and Thing Two. And there he has Communion. But, you know, with crazy rhymes.

No doubt the whole thing makes St. George's Anglican Church in Guelph,

A Cat, a Hat and a Eucharist

Ont., a bit of a spectacle. But then again, in the church's own words, this whole thing is just an attempt to make sense of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for the youngest of children in the church. Huh, imagine that. Is it odd? Yeah, really odd. But it also shows the depths to which this church will go to make sure its smallest members find ways to connect with God in the service.

I don't know, I probably wouldn't do it in my church... but then again ...

FIND IT @ youtube.com. Search for "A Cat, a Hat and a Eucharist."

Rev. Bradley Childs is minister at First, Regina.

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North Tryon, P.E.I., North Tryon; Interim Moderator Rev. Bill Dean; 1556 Pt. Prim Rd., Belfast PE C0A 1A0; 902-659-2417; churchbuilder@hotmail.com.

St. John's, N.L., St. Andrew's (The Kirk); Full-time; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Jonathan Dent, 98 Elizabeth Ave., St. John's NL A1B 1R8; 709-722-2383; jd123444@gmail.com.

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Synod of Central, Northeastern Ontario and Bermuda

Amherst Island, St. Paul's; Half-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Karen Bach; 613-353-1033; karen.bach@utoronto.ca; stpaulsamherstisland.com.

Brampton, North Bramalea; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Geoff Ross; 905-451-1723; geoff@standrewsbrampton.ca.

Erin, Burns and Ospringe, Knox; Two-point charge, full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Harvey Self, PO Box 276, Orangeville, ON L9W 2Z7; 519-941-1334; office@tweedsmuirpresbyterian.org.

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Toronto, Glenview; Full-time senior minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Robert Faris; c/o St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, 73 Simcoe St., Toronto, ON M5J 1W9; 416-593-5600 ext. 229; b.faris@standrewstoronto.org.

Uxbridge, St. Andrew's-Chalmers; Full-time minister; Interim Moderators Hugh Donnelly and Rev. Dr. Lynda Reid; 814- 25 Cumberland Lane, Ajax ON L1S 7K1; jlreid@bell.net.

Synod of Southwestern Ontario

Bayfield, Knox; Part-time; Interim Moderator Rev. John Henderson, PO Box 824, Exeter, ON N0M 1S6; 519-235-2608; henderson.johncharles@gmail.com.

Hamilton, Central; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Curtis Bablitz, 2138 Brant St., Burlington, ON L7P 3W5; 905-335-2640; minister@branthills.org.

Hamilton, MacNab Street; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Bob Geddes; 905-389-3001; bobgeddes@rogers.com.

Hanover, St. Andrew's; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Alex McCombie, c/o St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 20004, Hanover, ON N4N 3T1; 519-363-5392; standrews@wightman.ca.

Walkerton, Knox; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Owen Kim, 19 Brownlee St S., PO Box 526, Teeswater, ON N0G 2S0; 519-392-6955; maplemission@gmail.com.

Synod of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario

Winnipeg, Kildonan Community Church; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Matthew Brough; 204-803-7743; matt@prairiechurch.ca.

Synod of Saskatchewan

Weyburn, Knox; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Bob Wilson; 2242 Goff Place, Regina, SK S4V 2T7; 306-525-3889; wilsonret@sasktel.net.

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Burnaby, Burnaby Taiwanese; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Glen Davis; gjidavis@telus.net.

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obituaries

Embree, Ruth Evelyn, died on October 15, 2014 at Nesbit Lodge in Toronto, Ont. Beloved wife of the late Rev. Dr. Bernard L. M. Embree; cherished mother of Blaise DeLong Bolduc and Paul DeLong of Toronto; dear grandmother to Wayland, Matthew and Andrea DeLong; loving stepmother to Maynard Embree, Karenne Embree Hartley, Karelle Embree Broyles and devoted "Nana" to Christopher, Matthew, Johanna and Megan Embree, Rebecca and Nathaniel Hartley, Nathan and Stephen Broyles.

Ruth enjoyed a lifelong commitment to the Presbyterian Church in Canada, serving as secretary to the President of Knox College, Dr. Farris in the 70s, overseas with Bernard in Singapore, Hong Kong and China and at the churches she attended. In retirement she and Bernard attended West Vancouver Presbyterian Church.

Garner, Rev. H. Douglas, passed away on Wednesday, October 8, 2014 at the age of 93 years. Doug was predeceased by his wife Lenna (2003), his brothers Donald and Harold and his sister Norma Lewis. Doug is fondly remembered by his sister-in-law Margaret Carr and numerous nieces and nephews. A memorial service was held on Wednesday, October 15, 2014 at First Presbyterian Church, Regina, Sask., with Rev. Brad Childs officiating. Donations in Doug's memory may be made to the Lenna and Doug Garner Mission Trust Fund, c/o The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 50 Wynford Drive, Toronto, Ont., M3C 1J7.

Doug Garner earned a B.A. in 1949 from the University of Saskatchewan. He received his M.Div in 1952 from St. Andrew's College. He was ordained at Knox Metropolitan in Regina, Sask., that same year but decided to enroll at New College at the University of Edinburgh for further training. He concentrated on church history with a deep respect for John Wesley and also New Testament studies. Doug did pastoral supply work at Canongate Church and Prestonfield in Edinburgh as well as other charges in Perth, Killin and Glasgow. Doug eventually determined that academia was not for him. Believing that his doctoral work was keeping him from his true love of congregational ministry, he decided to return to Canada.

In 1954 Doug began working at Neville-Vanguard (a three-point charge) near Swift Current, Sask. After three years he spent another 18 years at St. Andrew's United Church in Arcola (also a three-point charge) and met his beloved Lenna at the encouragement of several congregants. Finally Doug moved on to Grenfell United Church for another nine years of ministry. The couple remained in Grenfell until 1990 where Doug continued to serve in many different capacities.

In the early 90s, Doug began to feel as if his home denomination had "left him." While Doug did speak of the rift between those supporting the United Church's blessing of same-sex unions and ordaining openly gay clergy, his real worry was not about homosexuality. His real concern was that the church had begun to abandon the necessity of Christ and the authority of scripture. And so in 1990-1991 Doug, along with 45 other members of Grenfell United Church, joined together for independent worship and study which would eventually become the nucleus of Trinity Presbyterian Church (founded in 1992).

Doug was a minister in the United Church of Canada from 1952 until 1986. He joined the Presbyterian Church in Canada post-retirement and continued to be a blessing to the Bride of Christ, an inspiring figure and mentor to many. Doug was a devoted man. He loved his wife, his Bible and the God of his salvation.

Thanks be to God and all glory for every day we had blessed with the life of Doug Garner.

Smith, Rev. Dr. Richard Carlisle, a husband, father, minister, scholar, traveller and teacher passed away peacefully after suffering an injury from an accidental fall while on vacation.

Richard was born in Marietta, Oklahoma, and in 1951, after receiving his honours B.A. in history from Austin College in Sherman, Texas, he attended the Louisville Presbyterian Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He graduated with a B.D. in May 1954 and was ordained as minister of Troy and Nonesuch Presbyterian Churches near Versailles, Kentucky.

He married his life-long love, Eddie-Lee Embry of Clark County, Kentucky, in 1954 and they were blessed with four sons.

After receiving his M.A. in ancient languages and literature in 1957 from the University of Kentucky and his Ph.D. in ancient history in 1961 from the University of Illinois, Richard taught in Wisconsin and Texas prior to moving to Edmonton, Alta., to teach classics at the University of Alberta in 1965. He retired in 1995 after serving on many boards and committees and as assistant dean of arts, as chair of classics and as chair and professor of the University of Alberta School in Rome, Italy. At the time of his death, he was professor

emeritus of classics in the Department of History and Classics of the University of Alberta.

Richard and Eddie-Lee became members of Dayspring Presbyterian Church in 1970. He served two stints as an elder (1971-1993 and 2013 until his death). He was a faithful member of the choir and then the Dayspring Singers and served congregational committees and task forces.

Richard transferred his ministerial standing to the PCC in 1971 and thereafter was on the appendix to the roll of the Presbytery of Edmonton-Lakeland. He provided pulpit supply for many of the congregations of the presbytery and served as interim moderator for First, Eastminster, and Calvin Churches at various times.

Richard enjoyed being connected to his community and in addition to his almost daily bridge habit he served on the ethics committee at the Royal Alexander Hospital, as a member of the PCC's university chaplaincy committee, as treasurer for his community association, as a member of the Richard Eaton Singers and in many other community activities.

Richard missed his much loved wife Eddie-Lee who predeceased him in 2010. He was also predeceased by his parents Richard and Sue and his brother William. He will live on through and his memory will be cherished by his four sons: Mark, Bruce (wife Jill), Scott (wife Meriam) and Brian (wife Rosa) and his adored grandchildren: Julian, Christopher, Stephen, Amalia, Eric, Damian, Kyler and Aiden.

He will be greatly missed from the community of faith and care that is Dayspring Church and from the fellowship and work of the Presbytery of Edmonton-Lakeland. A service celebrating Richard's life was held on Saturday, October 25, 2014 at Dayspring Presbyterian Church, Edmonton, Alta.

ILLUSTRATION: BARRY FALLS

FOR THE JOURNEY

Winter Wisdom

It starts with a relationship with God. By David Webber

I remember the time 42 years ago when Linda, her dad and I went fishing up the middle fork of the White River. Linda and I had just bought our first new vehicle, a 1973 Chevy four-wheel drive pickup and we—I should say I—were just itching to show it off and impress someone. If that "someone" could be my new and difficult-to-impress Norwegian father-in-law Ole, that was a double bonus. So on the day of Christmas Eve we set off to drive 50 miles into the Rocky Mountains up the logging road to where the White River forks into three smaller versions of itself.

The logging road was well maintained though completely deserted on the day before Christmas. Fifty miles of logging road brought us to the spur road that wound its way downhill to the White River forks. It wasn't plowed. I was ecstatic. What an opportunity to show off the new pickup's four-wheel drive capacity.

Linda said, "I don't think you should try it, David."

"Aw, no problem hon," I said as I reached down to demonstrate the pickup's new shift-on-the-fly four-wheel drive feature. I hit the snow bank at an exciting clip. It was quite impressive as the pickup blasted its way through in a great cloud of snow and began its decent down the hill through two feet of fresh, flying powder.

The truck had enough momentum to grind its way through the powder snow to about half way down the long hill. At that point the transmission shuddered and we slid unceremoniously into the ditch.

I tried everything to back out of the ditch but nothing would work. The more I tried the more stuck we got. Two feet of powder snow on a hill that you have to reverse up is no easy go. When you have to start from a sideways slant in a ditch, it's four times as challenging. I spun the tires and rocked the pickup until those tires smelled of melting rubber.

Finally Ole snorted. "Well, I guess it's time to get out and start shoveling."

"I don't have a shovel," I said.

"What do you have?" Ole asked.

"Two pairs of snow shoes, a couple of fishing rods and a green cowhide that stinks real bad," I said, somewhat sheepishly.

Ole shook his head. "What were you going to do with the cowhide Dave, use it for fish bait?"

"I was going to try tanning it but I haven't got around to it yet. That's why it's stinking so bad," I said.

Ole just shook his head again.

"I could snowshoe up the hill to the logging road and flag someone down to help," Linda said.

"It's Christmas Eve, Linda," her ›

dad said. "And it's not likely that any loggers are even in the bush today. In fact, it's not likely anyone will be back up here again until after the New Year."

"Well I guess we will just have to wait till they get worried back at the ranch and send out a rescue party," said Linda.

"Well, uh, I'm not sure your mom even knows exactly where we are," I said. Linda and her dad both stared at me. They were both shaking their heads.

It was not my finest hour, nor my wisest moment. Wisdom would have dictated not driving downhill through two feet of powdered snow 50 miles out in the bush on Christmas Eve when no one really knew where on earth we were. Wisdom would have demanded more than a couple pairs of snowshoes, two fishing rods and a rotting cowhide for emergency equipment. Wisdom would have required much more than a thermos of tea and a couple of chocolate bars for emergency rations. But hey, when I was 23 years old I don't ever remember anyone accusing me of having much for wisdom, just an overdose of bravado and self confidence, especially when it came to anything to do with the bush. Given the Rocky Mountains' penchant for sudden, fierce winter storms we could well have perished or at the very least been extremely uncomfortable for a few nights until someone found us.

In the end it was the rotting cowhide that saved us. Using it as a traction mat and the snowshoes as shovels we were eventually able to claw our way back up the hill and head for home. But that trip has caused me to consider wisdom many times since—why it is so often elusive to me and whether or not there is a source of wisdom that I can tap into beyond myself.

The Bible maintains that there is a source of wisdom that is outside me. It says so in a number of different ways and places but the most compelling is in Proverbs 9:10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight."

At first blush this passage almost sounds like one can use God like a wisdom dispenser, sort of like the genie in the bottle. But if that is what it means it has never worked that way for me. Three words are important for me in the text. "Fear," with regards to the Lord, is reverence and awe. "Beginning," with regards to wisdom, is really the essential prerequisite or foundation. And "knowledge," with regards to God, is a knowing relationship. So what the text is saying, to me at least, is that the all-elusive wisdom in life for me is somehow grounded in a knowing reverent relationship that I can have with the awesome God of the Bible.

This pretty much lines up with my experience of my relationship with God. As I deepen that relationship a whole host of things seem to happen within me, the least of which is that I find myself looking at problems, situations, decisions, relationships and reactions in a different way. For example, harkening back to the story I began with, where my self-centred desire to impress someone could have gotten us all killed, my growing relationship with God over the years has made me far less self-focused and less concerned with impressing anyone. It's not that I have developed more human wisdom so much as that God has changed me in ways so that His divine nature and wisdom have sort of leaked into my life. I hardly ever bury my four-wheel drive in a snow bank anymore just to impress someone. Now when that happens it's usually just my lousy driving or the result of dodging logging trucks. I wonder if God can do anything about that?

Rev. David Webber is a minister of the Cariboo, B.C., house church ministry.

Looking Glass

By Joan Bond

I glory not in cloud-skimming skyscrapers,
nor in glass glare of a rising sun.
I glory not in concrete and steel,
nor in parks manicured with magnificence.
I glory not in cathedrals of stone and wood,
with stained windows and smooth pews.

I glory in the perfect Parable-Maker,
Who loves people of broken glass and spirit
Who knows my story and still loves me.
I glory in the divine Coach,
in His sense of direction
and His ways with wayward me.

I glory in the Light of the world,
Who takes my nicks and chips and scratches
Who makes me into a looking glass,
reflecting Him.

JOAN BOND LIVES IN SASKATCHEWAN.

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CHRISTIAN WORTHINGTON ON HIS PAINTING "PILATE PRESENTING CHRIST AND BARABBAS:"

"Typically in classical painting, when you see this subject represented, *the difference between Jesus and Barabbas is so obvious. Here you have this angelic, heavenly looking Christ with the glow over his head; then you have Barabbas looking beat up, and maybe in chains. And the point of the story is to go, 'Ah ha, silly people.'*

"But with this painting what I tried to do is, by pulling the camera back so to speak, it gets to a point where you can't tell the difference between the two. ... That's the problem with humanity—we can't tell the difference."

PRESBYTERIAN RECORD

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FOR THE RECORD

To Question Well

Asking and listening is a great way to have a conversation. By David Harris

The last several issues of the *Record* have focused a great deal on our ability or inability to have reasonable conversations about thorny issues within the church. As some letters to the editor reveal, dismissiveness and closed-mindedness all too readily appear as soon as someone questions what another person considers dogma.

Perhaps it is, in part, a lack of understanding about how to conduct a conversation. We are so used to the sound-bite declaratives of politicians trying to score points, that I wonder if we have forgotten the art of conversation, let alone dealing with the content of a conversation?

Andrew Faiz explores one kind of conversation in his cover story about art and the related conversation he has with Christian Worthington.

All art—whether visual, music or literature—are a kind of conversation. Initially, it's a conversation between the artist and the viewer/listener/reader. But inevitably it engenders conversation among the wider community who engage with the art—e.g. a book club, the whispered discussions of people in art galleries, the passionate exchanges after watching a dramatic opera or ballet.

Usually people are relaxed and have their guard down in these encounters, so they more naturally employ one of the techniques that is useful to remember when there is more at stake in the debate. That is the value of asking questions.

But there is a terrible common underlying insecurity and fear that manifests itself through an inability to tolerate questions

Overwhelming research demonstrates that asking questions—leaving something on the table, in business parlance—engages the listener and is far more likely to be persuasive than simply throwing down the gauntlet with strident declaratives.

Search the Internet and you can find the benefit or virtue of asking questions applied to everything from teaching—"to question well is to teach well" is an old maxim—to dating. So I wonder if it might not also be a useful technique for us in the church to consider, especially as we debate and discuss difficult issues.

Declaratives tend to surface when we are afraid: When either we or the institutions we value are questioned, we circle the wagons and load our weapons.

And while we do that figuratively, others in the world do that literally. This is not to suggest there is any moral equivalence between murdering journalists in cold blood and calling people heretics in a religious debate. But there is a terrible common underlying insecurity and fear that manifests itself through an inability to tolerate questions.

The Boko Haram terrorists who slaughtered possibly 2,000 people and wiped the Nigerian town of Baga off the map have the same worldview as the gunmen who killed the Parisian journalists. Questioning is not an ability they have or will tolerate.

We may feel completely overwhelmed by these world events. But what would happen if we start small? What if we work at changing our own attitudes and to begin to ask questions?

My hope is that anger and fear will dissipate. We might not change our views, but we might be able to understand others' points of view better and to accept whatever decisions the church makes.

David Harris is the Record's *publisher and editor.*

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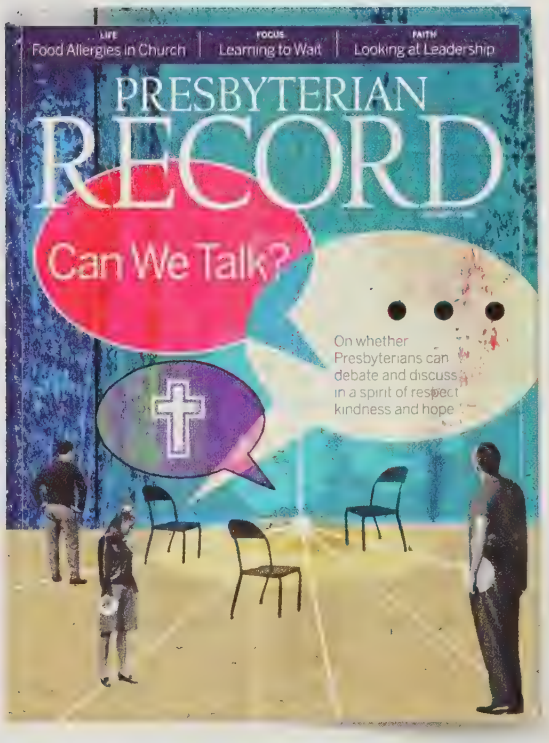

A Beautiful Story

Re The Wineglass, December 2014

I am a preacher's kid and remember all too well the years when there was so little money when my brother and I were growing up. At one point there wasn't enough spare cash to even own a radio. But, that lack of financial resources didn't in any way damage my childhood. Rather, I can look back on those years and remember all the good things—a loving family, parents who really cared and getting so much enjoyment out of very simple things. Thank you, Dr. Farris, for a beautiful story, lovingly told.

GRAEME CRABB, PERTH, ONT.

Long Overdue

Re Me First!, January

Some readers may be piqued by Glenn Ball's article on Narcissistic Personality Disorder, but we find it long overdue. We have done more than peek at this revelatory article, indeed, reading it over three times. Since our interest in this topic has not yet peaked, we would like to learn more about Dr. Ball's research, hopefully in a follow-up article in the *Record*.

ENID AND WILLARD POTTINGER, HAMILTON, ONT.

Untangle the Mess of Inequality

Re Loving Jian Ghomeshi, December 2014

The publication of this piece, especially without a companion article about loving the women alleging victimization by Jian Ghomeshi is wildly inconsiderate to the women of the Presbyterian Church, of whom I am one.

I am sure this offence was not ›

LETTERS, continued

intentional. I am sure the editorial board meant to be compassionate and not insensitive. I am sure the author did also. I commend the author on some of the content of the piece, particularly where reference is made to the fact that it is increasingly evident that "Jian Ghomeshi failed to show love and care for a number of women." Further, I do firmly believe in the benefits of a restorative—and loving—approach to justice, and I do believe that Jian Ghomeshi is a child of God and therefore beloved.

However, I was appalled by the conspicuous absence of a parallel piece about how to show love and care to those who have endured sexual harassment, sexual assault and physical violence perpetrated by their intimate partners. Ghomeshi is unlikely to read the *Record,* but likely hundreds, perhaps thousands, of women (and men, and children) who have survived sexual and physical violence, will read it.

This article is insensitive to the women who may have been victims first of all of Jian Ghomeshi himself and, more commonly, of various forms of sexual and physical violence or sexual harassment.

It would have been appropriate to publish an article about sexual harassment, about consent, about the importance of believing women, or a piece affirming the commitment of our church to ensuring that an institutional culture where sexual assault and harassment exist will not be condoned in our midst. Somewhere in there, an author could have appropriately said that Ghomeshi is a child of God. Of course he is. But, in order to untangle the mess of inequality that permitted Ghomeshi to harm women for so long, we need to stop paying so much attention to him and other male celebrities and start paying more attention to unpacking the toxic culture of celebrity and affirming the personhood, autonomy, dignity and rights of women.

REBECCA BROMWICH, OTTAWA

The Divine Purpose of God

Re Time to Listen for the Spirit's Voice, November 2014

Mark 10:1-12 is one of the primary texts where Jesus develops his teaching of sexual ethics. This periscope presents the radical difference between the conventional values thus far espoused by the disciples (and by the society to which they belonged) and a new perspective of the kingdom of God. Jesus does not base his kingdom values on so-called progressive values, opinions and cultural sentiment. Jesus resolutely extracts his sexual ethics from the Genesis account of creation.

In this text we find the Pharisees attempting to trap Jesus on a point of Mosaic law. They already had some indication that Jesus' views on the subject were extreme, leaving him open to the charge of contradiction to the Mosaic law. "Jesus, is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" they ask. "What did Moses command you?" rejoins Jesus. "Well, he permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away." Jesus doesn't correct them but gives the reason for such consent. "Moses allowed this concession not because it was the law of God, but it was because of your hard hearted ways. This rebellion of your hearts made it necessary for Moses to legislate for a

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situation which was never envisaged in the divine purpose of God." Jesus doesn't engage the Pharisees in an endless and futile debate about what the law stated and what Moses conceded; rather, he returns to God's plan for marriage and sexual relationships extracted from the creation account. Jesus' kingdom principles are marital monogamy and permanence of the "two-ness" of the sexes.

Nowhere do we discover Jesus naively imbibing from the cultural wells of the time. He would not adjust nor accommodate God's clearly stated standards for marriage and sexual relationships to that of the Pharisees. Again, the basis of such resolute teaching Jesus firmly established on the bedrock of God's created order.

GUY SINCLAIR, VANCOUVER

Less Frosty, More Manger

Loved the cover of December's issue. Congratulations on choosing an illustration from the many submissions you must receive for the Reader's Art Contest that captures so well "the reason for the season." Here's to fewer depictions of Frosty and "holiday trees" (yikes!) and more that reflect the birth of Christ.

T. EVANS, ST. CATHARINES, ONT.

Print 'em All

Re More Presbyteries Approve Overtures on Homosexuality, December 2014

Overtures from lower courts to the General Assembly are very important, and should be considered by the committees they are sent to. If they are to become public discussion beforehand, then I humbly suggest that the *Record* print all the overtures that come in any given year. Sessions, presbyteries and synods each take the time to discuss, compile and present items for discussion in this format that are of importance to them, and they believe the whole church. If you are going to only print the ones that are sensational and divisive, the *Record* is not doing the church a favour. The *Presbyterian Record* has received many awards for their journalistic work and I would hate to see this magazine become nothing more than a tabloid.

PAT WHITE, ONLINE

EDITOR'S NOTE

Again this month we are overwhelmed with long and passionate letters. We have had to edit many to fit in the magazine. We encourage you to seek the full arguments made by fellow readers online.

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POP CHRISTIANITY

Numbed and Helpless

Dealing with the empty indignations of daily tragedies. By Andrew Faiz

The attack last December on a school in Pakistan left me numb. Gunmen killed 132 children in a precise and thorough fashion without remorse. That I have a distant relationship to Pakistan is inconsequential. It was a horrifying attack perpetrated by people whose thinking had narrowed into a cold, methodical ice pick.

I didn't know how to feel—I felt indignant, angry, frustrated, sad and ultimately helpless to respond appropriately. I wonder if there is an appropriate response as a person of faith, as a Christian, as a Canadian Presbyterian? The interlocking emotions of anger and helplessness tighten in my gut.

I feel much the same way towards the missing, dead, lost native women across Canada. A May 2014 RCMP report numbered 1,017 such women—mothers, sisters, God's children.

I sense the indignation, anger and frustration in the aboriginal community as they call for hearings and more investigations. Something must be done. Something more constructive.

And along with them, I too wonder what more can be done. Do we as a church have a responsibility to these women? To those children in Peshawar?

In January, I heard about a young man who grew up in the West Bank in a family that has links to the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas. He was involved in the family business as a teen. When he converted to Christianity (and changed his name to John Calvin) his family disowned him. He came to Canada, first to Ontario to study at a Bible college and then to Alberta.

We demand some sort of emotional closure. But we know there is no such thing

Calvin will be deported by Canada because according to our laws he has known associations with terrorist organizations and is not eligible for refugee status. He has renounced his roots and family and he's gay. He claims he will be killed if he's returned to his birth lands. He is caught between the laws and customs of two different countries.

Do we as Canadian Presbyterians owe him anything? Should we care; and by caring, do we also take on the cause of the millions of international refugees who are caught in between other peoples' ambitions and greed?

Small-minded gunmen walk into the offices of a satirical magazine in Paris and kill 10 journalists and two police. In the hours and days afterwards we are inundated with facile "likes" on social media, chest- and tub-thumping quotations about the sanctity of free press and then the news cycle moves on.

We are numbed. We are indignant. We are helpless in the face of all this. We assign blame to religions and to religious organizations. We demand governments do something; that somebody do something. We demand some sort of emotional closure. But we know there is no such thing. There isn't. Our revenge fantasies, no matter how reasonably argued, will never mend, much less soothe, our broken psyches.

I do what I can in my own way. I donate to charities and offer prayers. I get involved in community efforts. I keep the faith. I maintain positive energy. I ...

Or perhaps our empty indignation is a sign we have failed our own beliefs. We have reduced the majesty and mystery of our faith to petty ideologies of right and wrong, of good and bad.

I don't have any answers. Just a lot of frustrated questions.

I find solace in the oddest of places: Over a meal with dear friends. With my wife and daughter, as they make silly jokes. Listening to music while making dinner. With a gang of friends at a pub. In worship—in the calm and community of hymn and prayer.

It doesn't seem enough. But what more can I do?

Andrew Faiz is the Record's *senior editor.*

BULLETIN

Community and World News

CP IMAGES

VIEWPOINT

Freedom From Hatred

Love your neighbour as yourself.

By Stephen Farris

We have all been shocked by the attacks in Paris on the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* and on shoppers in a Jewish grocery. They are assaults on our core values in a democratic society, values which are dear to our hearts. Paris is a Western city which many of us have visited and it is easy to imagine similar attacks happening in Canada, as has indeed already happened. We may be less aware of the repeated attacks by the extremist Islamic organization, Boko Haram, in northern Nigeria. The scale of the violence in Nigeria is, nevertheless, much greater. Twelve people died in the Paris attacks, which is 12 too many. The deliberately minimized official estimate of civilian deaths from a recent attack on Baga, Nigeria, is 150. Most informed parties think the actual death toll is many times higher. It is worthy to note that Christians are particularly singled out in the Nigerian attacks. ›

VIEWPOINT, continued

It is not my task today to consider why we hear more about attacks in the West than in Africa. Presbyterians should remember, however, that we have a long history of missionary work in Nigeria. These are our friends and partners. More importantly, Nigerian victims too are created in the image of God and for them Christ died. In short, they are human beings and they matter immensely. Let us be clear about all such attacks, wherever they take place and whoever the perpetrators may be, and let us use the language of the Christian faith to describe them, rather than merely borrowing from the culture: these attacks are sinful and wicked and repugnant in the eyes of God. These crimes will be judged by the one who says, "Thou shalt not kill."

The Paris attacks are often described as attacks upon our freedoms, particularly freedom of expression. With that description I have no quarrel. But it is too small a description. Such attacks are an assault on freedom from fear and its close relation, freedom from hatred. The attackers themselves can never do this, but we can do it to ourselves. In this as in all things we are told, "For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." If truth is the first casualty of war, hatred is its first recruit. But followers of Jesus need not fear and we must not hate.

Let us be clear about all such attacks, wherever they take place and whoever the perpetrators may be, and let us use the language of the Christian faith to describe them, rather than merely borrowing from the culture: these attacks are sinful and wicked and repugnant in the eyes of God

There is one specific consequence of this. Do you recall the Irish "Troubles" when "Protestant" and "Catholic" extremists perpetrated atrocities? All this was presented to the world as representative of our faith. I was ashamed and often said, "This has nothing to do with Christianity. It is a violation of everything our faith believes. It is not Christian." Accept it when your Muslim neighbour says something very like that. Oh, and about that neighbour ... we might remember to our soul's benefit that Jesus did not make any exceptions when he said: "Love your neighbour as yourself."

Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris is dean of St. Andrew's Hall at VST and moderator of the 2014 General Assembly.

NEW MISSION STAFF NAMED

International Ministries announced the appointment of Michelle Verwey as a mission worker at the invitation of the Presbyterian Church's partner, the Church of North India. Verwey has served as a nursing student and intern with CNI in the past. Recently, she completed her master's studies at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, where she focused on public health in developing countries.

Verwey will be working with the PWS&D-supported community health and development program run by the Central Regional Board of Health Services, and teaching at the Graduate School for Nurses in Indore, India.

"Mission engagement is always evolving and Michelle's appointment bears witness to this truth," said Glynis Williams, associate secretary for International Ministries. As a nursing student for two months in 2008, and two one-year internships between 2010 and 2013, Verwey learned from the church's partner in India, and now returns to work alongside her colleagues.

"Michelle will work under a newer model for mission, in that she will spend several one-month periods in India working hands-on, and the remainder of the time working by distance from Canada," said Williams. This new model responds both to the needs of the partner and to the changing needs of mission staff, enabling them to be abroad for shorter periods of time. It also means Verwey will be available as a speaker, something Williams sees as "an important plus to the arrangement."

Verwey's appointment began Jan. 1. *—AM and International Ministries*

A CALL FOR IDEAS

A subcommittee of Assembly Council is asking for suggestions from groups and individuals as it works on a strategic plan for the denomination.

The task was assigned to the council by the 2014 General Assembly as part of a motion to "declare that a clear and critical priority as a denomination is to renew, equip and inspire local congregations and missions."

"The subcommittee quickly realized the importance of understanding as clearly as possible what congregations were looking for in terms of resources that will encourage, support and strengthen their ministry," said Heather Crisp, convener of the council and subcommittee. "We felt we needed to have input from all elements of the church, especially congregations and individuals, in order to find out."

Due March 13, comments can be posted on presbyterian.ca, submitted by email, or sent to the national offices. Three questions were also sent to presbyteries.

"We would particularly like to receive suggestions or examples of how the resources available to the PCC, large or small, might make positive changes in a congregation," Crisp said. —*CW*

Ploughshares Director Resigns

John Siebert, executive director of Project Ploughshares, a peace and disarmament organization supported by the Presbyterian Church, has resigned after 10 years of service.

"It's been an incredible privilege to provide leadership at Project Ploughshares since 2005," Siebert told the *Record*. "Surprisingly, there have only been two executive directors in the 38-year history of the organization. Every organization needs new leadership from time-to-time to shake things up and allow change to happen."

He counts the day when the Arms Trade Treaty came into force on Dec. 24, 2014 "as a proud moment for Ploughshares. My colleague Ken Epps has been working with national and international partners for over 15 years to realize that moment. We need to celebrate these achievements."

Yet many challenges remain, including "advancing peace and disarmament in a changed Canada."

"I want to thank John for his outstanding work and leadership," wrote Scott Kline, then-chair of the organization's governing committee, in a December press release. "John has worked with an exceptional staff to fulfill our mission and to pursue our vision: 'a secure world without war, a just world at peace.'"

Siebert will continue as director until a suitable replacement is found. —*AM*

PWS&D Director Moves On

Ken Kim announced in January he would be resigning from his position as executive director of Presbyterian World Service & Development to become the leader of disaster response at World Renew, the relief and development agency of the Christian Reformed Church.

"It is time for a change, for both PWS&D and myself," he said in an email to staff at the church's national offices. "I have never considered the position as director for granted, or mine for life. I will miss being with the staff of this amazing team." March 15 will be his final day with the Presbyterian aid agency.

Rick Fee, general secretary of the Life and Mission Agency said he accepted Kim's letter of resignation with great regret. "He contributed immensely to the present stature of the development arm of our church," Fee said. "Worldwide it is recognized that PWS&D has an enviable reputation in the development and emergency relief and refugee spheres. PWS&D is regarded very highly across the Presbyterian Church and Ken has done much to raise it in prominence and profile."

Lara Scholey, convener of the PWS&D committee, said the group "especially appreciated Ken's ability to express his faith as a part of what he did, why he did it, and his ability to bring the development world and the church world together."

Kim has served as head of PWS&D since 2006, and previously served for more than a decade in Central America as a mission worker with International Ministries.

"I am confident that whoever should follow in the role of director will be able to take the agency to new heights with energy, creativity and skills beyond what I am able to offer," Kim said. "The ministry of PWS&D belongs to everyone. I was blessed to have been tasked with one component of it." —*CW with files from Rick Fee*

OPINION

Thanks for the Conversation

Let's keep talking it through. Edited by Andrew Faiz

In January the *Record* asked, Can We Talk? An example of two people disagreeing, with respect and openness, played out on Facebook in January on a page for friends and members of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

The conversation began when Rev. Jeremy Bellsmith, minister at Burns, Whitby, Ont., proposed an idea called Generous Spaciousness, by Rev. Wendy Gritter of New Direction (newdirection.ca). He described it as this: "New Direction focuses on creating a safe environment for people from both sides of the issue to nurture their faith and grow in their relationship with Christ."

He quoted Gritter as saying: "Generous spaciousness is energized by Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17 that we would be one so that the world would know. Our unity, transcending our differences and diversity, is intimately connected to our public witness. When we choose the way of love, we can find the beauty of unity, and we can be a beautiful picture to those who may be watching."

Rev. Emery Cawsey, minister at Whalley, Surrey, B.C., responded. Below is an excerpted example of their conversation.

EMERY CAWSEY: My personal prayer is that the church continue in her faithful witness in the area of human sexuality while loving all people as it has. I hope the church does not in the end worship the enlightenment god of the culture, but rather continues to worship the revealed God in Jesus Christ. My suspicion is the church is already divided, that the sexuality issue is simply the toothpaste cap on the reality of the view of the gospel. ... Whether the PCC stays within the orthodox faith on this issue or others, or chooses to leave it who knows. I know that the Church will continue and God will continue blessing the preaching of the gospel.

> Their love and commitment to each other and to the God that had united them was bigger than their difference on an issue

JEREMY BELLSMITH: I think we're united in our prayer that the church should remain faithful in our witness. I believe that to be one that includes both sides of this contentious issue.

It's why I hear God speaking in generous spaciousness: it allows us to hold Christ higher than our own perspectives on any one issue.

I wonder about the witness of a church that allows itself to be divided on one issue, when they hold so many other things in common. We share a love for God as revealed through the Jesus of the Bible, and devotion to his mission and gospel. How can divorcing from the family honour our high priest's prayer for unity?

My hope is for what God can do with a Church that is committed to the God that has brought us together, despite our differences.

I got to hear Tony Campolo and his wife speak on human sexuality while I was still in my undergrad. They had radically opposed views. Despite each being able to root their interpretation from the scriptures, they came to opposite conclusions. When the talk was over, they left. Still married; still together. Their love and commitment to each other and to the God that had united them was bigger than their difference on an issue.

Thanks again for the conversation. Let's keep talking it through.

CAWSEY: I appreciate your response; it is gracious and inviting, rare really. Herein is the rub for me. If it were simply up to me, frankly I would not care. I have relatives and friends who hold to a different view than myself and some are practicing homosexuals. It would be far easier to simply nod and turn one's head.

No one, when they consider it, would actually carry such thinking to its natural end, thankfully. The question is not whether to "include" or "exclude;" it is whether the behaviour or behaviours, the thought or thoughts, the belief or beliefs fit within the framework of the group (any group for that reason).

To read the full conversation:
facebook.com/groups/2346973826/

Also, be sure to join the Presbyterian Record Community Facebook group.

Faith

Deepening your relationship with God

THINKSTOCK

LEADERSHIFT

Evangelism Essentials

Sharing the gospel begins with relationships.

By Ross Lockhart

"How are you today?" the cashier asked politely in the checkout line at the local grocery store. "Saved!" my ministerial colleague replied, beaming with an angelic smile. "How about you?" Ugh. I cringed as the cashier faked a little smile.

Out in the parking lot I said, "Buddy, you've got to get a new line—that one is embarrassing to Jesus."

"Hey," he shot back, "I'm just engaging in a little evangelism."

Funny though, when you stop and think about people who helped you take steps towards faith in Jesus, did they use such an over-the-top approach to sharing the gospel?

As part of our "leadershift" in the Reformed tradition, I suggest we need to have teaching and ruling elders shepherding congregations that are evangelical, entrepreneurial ›

LEADERSHIFT, continued

and effective. This month we look at the critical practice of evangelism. Confession: I *love* evangelism. The opportunity to share the joy of the gospel with others (1 Peter 3:15-style with gentleness and respect) is gold. To share our faith and watch as the Holy Spirit helps people take steps towards faith in Jesus is better than front row seats at the Canucks game. It's amazing to know that in the sharing of who Jesus is for us, we too can be converted again and again. Often, however, people can't hear until they've been heard. It takes time. It requires real relationships.

So, I don't mean "evangelism" like my friend's hit and run tactics in the grocery store; no, if we confess God to be Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we know deep in our hearts that relationship is critical. The ultimate goal of evangelism is not conversion. That's the penultimate goal. The ultimate goal is that a transformed, redeemed Christ follower goes on to bless and mend God's broken yet beloved world. We help people get there by understanding evangelism to be a congregational process that helps people place their trust in Jesus, and by the Spirit's power, transforms them within community into disciples of Christ who participate in God's saving mission for the world.

Peter Drucker, the guru of 20th-century management theory, used to ask two critical questions of leaders and organizations: 1) What is your main business? And 2) How's business? I love that. What is the church's main business? One way to find out is to engage leaders in a question: "What is the gospel?" How one answers makes a huge difference in one's ministry and leadership. For example, if one says, "The gospel takes nice Canadians and makes them nicer," you get one kind of focus. If you answer, "God so loved the world..." or "God was in Christ reconciling the world..." you get a different leadership direction.

Furthermore, two of the critical questions every Christian leader must answer clearly in light of the gospel are, "What does Jesus save us from?" and "What does Jesus save us for?" If the answers to those questions are compelling and urgent then the need to engage as a missional leader in an evangelical ministry is clear.

Recently I was driving along with legendary professor of evangelism George Hunter III. "What holds people back from being evangelical in their leadership?" I asked him. Hunter, retired now from Asbury Seminary, replied, "It's a complex pathology. Increasingly, clergy are reluctant to move outside of their comfort zone. And that becomes more and more difficult as the perceived distance between the secular and the sacred becomes larger. The secular world no longer understands or values what it means to be a Christian leader and those who choose to remain in their comfort zone find it getting smaller and smaller."

As we live further into the new reality as a post-Christendom nation, the need for a compelling and urgent witness to pre-Christians will be a critical part of leadership for the church in the world. That testimony will be all the more effective if we build loving relationships with all those around us where we live, work and play. This is not the work of a few "religious professionals;" rather, it is the ministry of each and every human being washed by the dying of Christ and rising with him through what the church calls baptism. The leadership that is coming will help faithful and polite Canadian Christians move from being tongue-tied to testimony—until the Kingdom comes.

Rev. Dr. Ross Lockhart is director of ministry leadership and education at St. Andrew's Hall, Vancouver.

THINKSTOCK

PROGRESSIVE LECTIONARY

Put Down the Gospel Gun

The only thing you can give for the gospel is yourself. By Laurence DeWolfe

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
February 8, 2015
1 Corinthians 9:16-23

Evangelist Will Nichols goes by the name "The Gospel Gun." He strides into country-gospel concerts and self-named cowboy churches and draws. He fires at the devil first. And people are healed, left and right. Or so the story goes.

I've also heard the words "gospel gun" used to describe an argumentative approach to evangelism that many of us have experienced, and some of us tried. It's a barrage of proof texts and Christian jargon used to convince someone of the absolute and ›

He didn't come for his own sake, or to become a hero, or to win any battles. He came armed only with a message that wasn't his own, and a commission from the subject of that message to share it

overwhelming power of the gospel.

From what we know of Paul's relationship with the Corinthians we might conclude he wished he had a gospel gun when he first strode into Corinth. If only he could have persuaded them beyond question of the truth of the gospel and his authority to proclaim it! They wouldn't be in so much trouble. They wouldn't be troubling him. He wouldn't have to write to them, wait for their reply (More questions! More problems!), and write to them again.

There's a whiff of gun smoke in some parts of the Corinthian letters that we know about. There was at least one other letter someone deemed too hot to handle and too dangerous to keep. Sometimes his words leave us feeling as if we're under fire ourselves. Paul doesn't fire his points of proof as offense, but as defense. In our reading today the word "gospel" rings out five times. The repetition is probably intentional. Paul fires off a round of rhetorical points, all in response to the Corinthians' salvos.

The word we know as "gospel" means "good news." Some go on to place the word as Christians used it in its original context, the old Greek translation of the Old Testament. There it means good news of redemption and release. The Greek word was also used as a title for the biographies of famous men, like Caesar Augustus. Christians put that title to their stories of Jesus. Paul came to Corinth to tell of Jesus and to proclaim a salvation to be found in him. His cross was proof of God's love for the world. His resurrection was proof Jesus was to be believed and followed. It was all about Jesus. The Corinthians made it mostly about Paul.

Paul shot back. It was indeed about him, as he embodied the good news. He offered himself as the ultimate proof that the news was good. He didn't come at them with the gospel gun blazing. He didn't come for his own sake, or to become a hero, or to win any battles. He came armed only with a message that wasn't his own, and a commission from the subject of that message to share it. He came to meet people as and where they were. He crossed barriers of religion, culture and experience.

We're already convinced that the news is good. We're good at telling the world what's good about the gospel, and what's good for the world. In fact, we're so good at telling others what's good for them that many just don't listen anymore. A whole generation have concluded they already know what we're going to tell them is good. Mostly, they assume we'll say "no" to what they believe is good. Mostly we do. What's the news?

We are. We're the news of the gospel today. Without our witness to lives transformed and transforming, all our boasting about the goodness of the gospel for the world will fall flat. We have to start by laying down our gospel guns in mutual disarmament within the church. Then, appropriately humbled, we'll begin to understand that all we have to offer the world for its good, in service of the gospel, is ourselves. After all, God's love wins every battle.

Rev. Dr. Laurence DeWolfe teaches at Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax.

THINKSTOCK

RENEWAL

Your Life Verse

Bringing God's word to all you do. By Fred Stewart

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11).

This has become my life verse. It is a comfort when things go wrong. It is an inspiration when I feel small and insignificant. It is a lens for me to understand both my past and my future.

This past year, one of my congregations bought and moved into a different kind of space for worship and ministry. It was originally built to be a funeral home and then renovated into a restaurant/bar. The building has been known in recent years as The Spur.

As we gathered and prayed in the main dining room, looking for God's wisdom and direction as to whether we should purchase it as our new home, we considered these verses:

"And let us consider how we may spur one ›

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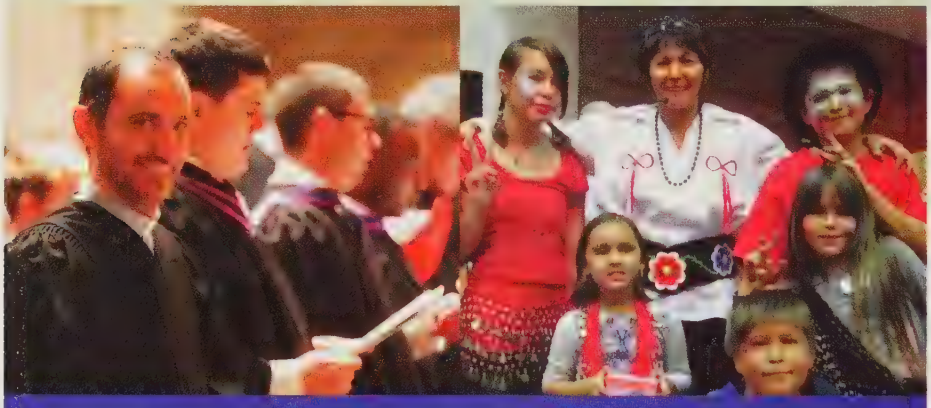

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RENEWAL, continued

another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25).

On the one hand it seemed cute that we could find verses that talked abut The Spur. However, as we prayed and meditated, these verses seemed to come alive to us and began to speak into our hearts and minds about ministry in this new place. It inspired us to call the building, "the Spur youth and family ministry centre."

A last example concerns my own call to ministry and the type of pastor I believe I have been formed to be. I remember sharing this with my peers and counsellors at our guidance conference and having all this affirmed by one counsellor who said she almost could have predicted my ministry scripture.

"One of the two who heard John speak and followed [Jesus] was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah'" (John 1:40-41).

It is for me an understanding that the primary task of the gospel is to share the gospel. These verses refocus me, energize my ministry and allow me to find direction and purpose.

I share all this to encourage you. Do you have a scripture for your life, for your ministry and for your congregations? If not, ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to one.

I would go further. If you serve on a committee or are part of a choir or praise team then find a scripture.

The next time you start a project, a trip or a year, why not spend the time to connect to a verse that will bring God's word into the core of all you do?

Rev. Fred Stewart is executive director of the Renewal Fellowship.

THINKSTOCK

ORDINARY RADICAL

Consumption Inc.

Small steps to help stop the insanity. By Amy MacLachlan

Yesterday I was at the drugstore with my six-year-old. While there, we walked down the Christmas clearance aisle where I noticed a Kinder Surprise gift pack—filled with chocolates and a stuffed toy, and those horrible hollow eggs with a teensy toy inside (the very toys I always curse after my kids open them—another tiny piece of junk played with for two minutes and then forgotten). The original price was $11.99—I remember seeing them before Christmas and deciding they were too expensive. But now they were marked down to four bucks! I could get one each for both my kids for less than one used to cost!

That my daughters have a combined stuffed toy collection of about 100 items, and no child needs more chocolate, just couldn't compete with the bargain (and the cries from my ›

FEBRUARY'S CHALLENGE

"Small things with great love."

Spoken by Mother Teresa and trumpeted by Shane Claiborne, the idea this month is to let these simple words become your daily mantra. Instead of grand gestures, focus on small things done with kindness, care and compassion—things that will make others smile, and feel as though they've encountered the love of Christ.

daughter that she's "never wanted anything so bad" in her life). Two of these packages came home with us. My husband just shook his head.

This is hard. And I still have 10 months to go—with challenges much more difficult than this to come.

My goal in January was to give things away (after all, in Shane Claiborne's *Irresistible Revolution* he writes, "Charity is merely returning what we have stolen"), and buy less. So I went through closets and cupboards, bookcases and kitchen drawers, toy boxes and even toiletries. It felt good to purge—especially at the start of a new year—but there are definitely things that are hard to let go of, and harder still to avoid shopping for what you just gave away.

That said, before I move onto this month's challenge (see the box at the top of this page), I've been doing other things that may at first seem unrelated to curbing my shopping whims, but have an impact nonetheless. I signed up with my local CSA—a program that enables you to buy organic

It felt good to purge—especially at the start of a new year—but there are definitely things that are hard to let go of

produce directly from local farmers. It's a win-win for everyone. I bought the candles for our Advent wreath from Evangel Hall, the Presbyterian mission in downtown Toronto serving the city's homeless. The candles are made by the mission's clients, giving them much-needed income and a meaningful task to work at. And when my oldest daughter wanted to join in on the "Elf on the Shelf" obsession, I went a slightly different route—Kindness Elves are built on the same premise, but, 1) You make them yourself (or, you get your mom to make them for you. Thanks, Mom!), and 2) Instead of watching for "good" behaviour and reporting to Santa each night, Kindness Elves leave notes for the kids each morning, offering ideas of little acts of kindness they can do that day.

But what else can I do? In an interview with Christian author and blogger Rachel Held Evans, Claiborne talks about living "with imagination"—to "reimagine who we are and how we are to live in light of Jesus." So I got to thinking about some different sorts of things I can do that might, in Claiborne's words, "challenge patterns of consumerism."

First, I love to bake and I've always wanted to make my own bread. It's healthier, cheaper, and who doesn't want their house to smell like homemade bread? And I'm not talking bread machine bread, either; no, I mean real, honest-to-goodness, get-your-hands-in-there bread. I'm hoping to someday make it regularly enough that I can kiss store-bought sandwich loaves goodbye.

Next, a friend of mine makes her own laundry detergent. Yeah, you read that right. The recipe she gave me is way cheaper than the store-bought stuff, and better for the environment and sensitive skin, too. I also want to try my hand at making my own moisturizer. No mad scientist ingredients and no animal testing involved.

Lastly, I want to buy fair trade coffee (always! Not just on random occasions). Fair trade might not be perfect, but it's far better than the alternative. (Go to fairtrade.ca to learn more.)

These goals may not seem like much, or maybe you're wondering what the heck homemade detergent has to do with helping others, but it's important to remember that so many of our choices as consumers are part of an intricate and far-reaching web of farmers (often poorly treated and poorly paid), suppliers, manufacturers (which sometimes involves child labour), buyers, transporters, retail businesses, etc. So first, learn (doing so might make you re-think how you spend your money). And second, act. We can't do everything, but in the end, I think it's the small steps we take towards change that matter—that add up to something that truly does make a difference, somehow, somewhere.

Amy MacLachlan is the Record's *managing editor. Follow her weekly blog (and find links to the above examples!) at presbyterianrecord.ca.*

Life

Thoughts and inspiration for your daily life

THINKSTOCK

FAMILY

Raising Boys

We need to support and encourage what makes them different.

By Matthew Ruttan

Boys are different from girls. But how? And how can we help them thrive?

Aside from my experience as a boy, as the father of a boy, and as a friend of those with boys, a book by Dr. Gregory Jantz and Michael Gurian inspired this piece: *Raising Boys by Design: What the Bible and Brain Science Reveal About What Your Son Needs to Thrive.*

Why are boys falling behind in schools? Why, in the U.S., are one million boys being medicated for brain disorders? Why do they get two-thirds of the D's and F's? Why are the majority of drop-outs male? Why was autism once diagnosed to the tune of about one in 1,000 and now it's about one in 50, mostly in boys?

Today's culture creates high ›

FAMILY, continued

anxiety in kids. I wonder what the impact is of fewer social safety nets (more broken families/divorce), or of abuse, or of other socializing factors, or of the loss of faith in many homes?

It's complicated. And this article is insufficient. But I've learned a lot from this book (and others) and there are some good things to share about helping our boys thrive.

First, what makes them different and what are some of the challenges?

1. HOW THEY PROCESS INFORMATION

Male brains use seven times more gray matter then female brains. They focus intently and spend time doing, feeling, thinking, working and playing. Girls use about 10 times more white matter. White matter is a networking grid that connects with other processing centres.

Notice how girls seem to transition more quickly between tasks? Or how boys seem to focus on something and it's hard to get their attention to transition to something else? These are processes to do with gray and white matter. We often interpret, Jantz and Gurian argue, boys' energy as being disruptive, or resilience as being uncaring. But this isn't always the case.

In many schools, physical activities have been cut back. Screen time has gone up. It seems there are fewer outlets for boys to release what's built up inside. The result is often acting out.

When boys can be active, they do better in school and pay attention with more success. It seems many of our learning environments are geared toward predispositions more naturally occurring in girls.

2. CHANGING FAMILY REALITIES

Both parents need to be actively involved. This can be tough, especially when a dad or mom isn't in the picture. In those situations, it helps to get another trusted male or female figure to be a part of the child's caregiving. Men and women tend to nurture differently, and the child benefits differently from each.

As adolescent psychiatrist Mark Banschick wrote: "There is no substitute for being loved by parents who are fair and involved."

3. WE OVER-PROTECT FROM HARDSHIP

We stress games where "everyone wins" and of non-competition. That has some value. But the sense of competition and victory can be naturally (and healthily) present in boys. Plus, a non-competition mindset simply does not jive with the world we are preparing them for.

4. WE OVER-STIMULATE

We are over-stimulating our boys' (and girls') brains, mostly through scheduling or technology. Although there are some benefits to technology, screen time with the very young has become so prevalent that unhealthy media exposure is starting to affect brain development and impact grades. Plus, it seems boys are "skimming" for information more, especially via technology, resulting in more shallow thinking. There's nothing wrong with some TV and (appropriate) video games here and there, but kids need time to be bored—it's good for imagination and brain development.

So how else can we help? Well, we can help them be heroes.

Jantz and Gurian use the idea of a "H.E.R.O." as an overarching theme. H is for Honour (adhering to truth, values and compassion beyond self); E for Enterprise (doing big important things for others, himself and the world); R for Responsibility (having people and things to carry minute-by-minute); and O for Originality (being a dreamer, a thinker, an explorer). The H.E.R.O. idea works well for faith development, too.

These four traits are actually what many boys long for. Look at the superheroes they dream about! They're all there—and also in godly men around them (if they have any around them).

Second, boys need healthy men in their lives. Men they can trust. And if there aren't any in the home, why not be intentional about connecting with trusted others? Growing up can be confusing. A boy's initial sense of sexuality takes shape over 10 years. Parents need to be continually open to discussion and to creating healthy models for love and relationships.

Third, we need to be aware of the differences between boys and girls and advocate for them. Ensure your son is getting the right amount of physical activity—healthy channels of release for energy. Is his learning environment sit-and-listen only, or are they more conducive to his God-given design?

Fourth, we need to create new rules around technology. This deserves a whole different piece, but here's the question Jantz and Gurian ask: Is technology a guest in your house, or a family member?

Fifth, we can help boys process their emotions. Sometimes talking about it ad nauseam is the only route we take with a problem. But what if that actually made boys retreat further within themselves, especially for introverts? We need to know the value of activity and play in helping boys "work it out."

AWESOMELY SET APART

Hebrew language scholar Robert Alter translates Psalm 139:14 like this: "for awesomely I am set apart."

That's my boy. Probably yours, too.

I'm going to end with this thought from the book: "Boys have beautiful big hearts, constantly pumping with energy, pulsing with hope." Let's help our boys become the "heroes" they were God-designed to be.

Rev. Matthew Ruttan is minister at Westminster, Barrie, Ont., and a father of three. He blogs regularly at presbyterianrecord.ca.

THINKSTOCK

REFLECTION

Why Sponsor a Refugee?

Understanding the blessing of freedom. By Ena van Zoeren

As someone new to worshipping at Varsity Acres, Calgary, when I heard the refugee committee was preparing to welcome a family I immediately volunteered to help. Why? For me it was simple; this was something that I could do that would be a part of bringing God's blessing and mercy to a family that was in need of freedom.

Most of us watch the news and are overwhelmed with compassion as we see the images of people in need. One image that haunts me is of an elderly woman with a walker crossing a mountain pass to escape the war ravaging her home. For others it's the images of families living in massive tent cities, waiting for food or water. I am reminded of the prayer, "Dear Lord, ›

REFLECTION, continued

The families they have helped have come from virtually every corner of the world—Kosovo, Iraq, Eritrea, Mexico and now Myanmar. The need is so great, and as Jesus says, 'the workers are few'

the things we pray for, give us the grace to labour for."

What I learned in conversation with the members of the refugee committee at Varsity was that the committee has been welcoming and assisting refugee families since 1988. The families they have helped have come from virtually every corner of the world—Kosovo, Iraq, Eritrea, Mexico and now Myanmar. The need is so great, and as Jesus says, "the workers are few." Faced with such a great need they respond to the question, "Why sponsor a refugee?" by saying, "How do you *not* help?"

For that reason it was a cause for joy when we welcomed the Choza family from Myanmar last August. They had been living in exile in Malaysia, having escaped the brutality of the army who had forced them into labour in their homeland. KoBie escaped first and when settled, sent for his wife NuNu. While in Malaysia their son, VaBie, now three, was born.

With barely a month's notice we found, furnished and equipped an apartment. Toys, bedding and pantry items were donated. A group went to the airport, picked up KoBie, NuNu and VaBie and brought them to their new home. At that point the real hard work began.

In the months since their arrival, committee members have taken them to appointments with Immigration Services, and for health assessments, and on trips to get Landed Immigrant documentation, health cards, bus passes, winter coats, mitts and boots. At one point, overwhelmed by all the places he needed to go, KoBie asked, "How will I know how to do this?" The committee member with him immediately responded, "That is what you have us for!"

There have been moments of frustration, as we have struggled with all the tasks and the time that it takes refugees to learn how to live in freedom. We know there is so much expected of us and still more for us to give, but we are overwhelmed with gratitude that we can and are helping. A constant refrain that is expressed is, "God is good!" The blessing certainly extends into the refugee committee and the congregation as well as the Choza family.

We know that we are honoured to be with this family on their journey to freedom. We rejoice with them knowing that in the spring they will welcome a baby, a Canadian citizen—a child of freedom. Just how profound that freedom is struck our hearts one day as KoBie and a committee member waited while NuNu visited the dentist. The committee member suggested that KoBie take VaBie outside to play in the park that they could see through the window. "How much will this cost?" KoBie asked. "It's free," she responded. KoBie explained that in his country, parks are private areas and you have to pay to use them. Then he took VaBie to the park to play.

Why sponsor a refugee? For the sheer joy of witnessing the blessing of freedom, seen in the ear-to-ear grin of a father watching his son playing and laughing in the park.

Ena van Zoeren is a retired minister in the Presbyterian Church, living in Airdrie, Alta., and worshipping at Varsity Acres, where she volunteers with the refugee committee and serves as the coordinator of the Side by Side Respite Program.

PHOTO BY SANDI CHURCHILL

THINKSTOCK

MEDITATION

Hidden Blessings

Stopping to listen. By Jody Malm

Twisted ankle!

Time to rest, put your foot up, ice, heat, and stay off of it. Stay off of it, stay off of it ...

I have to work; I don't have time for this. I see the plants need watering, garden needs weeding, I see the berries need picking, I see the clothes need washing, put on the line, folded, put away, the dishes need washing, I see, I see, I see.

Sit, put your foot up, ice ... sit.

Read a book. I get up and stack some books beside me. I'm thirsty, a bottle of water, hmm...a pot of coffee. I get up and make one. Bring out a tray of snacks; what else could I possibly need? Oh, my laptop; I could email, get the cemetery paper work done, yeah, get caught up. Off I go ... hobble, hobble, hobble.

MEDITATION, continued

I hear the voice in my head say, *I want you to rest. Do you want this to re-occur? You need to listen to me.*

Do you hear me?

Sometimes people think bad things happen because the devil is playing havoc in our lives. I choose not to think that way. I guess I try to find the good in most areas of my life and believe that things happen for a good reason. I may not know, now or ever, what the reason was, but it helps me to be in a better place.

Example: Ankle twisted, not the greatest of timing, out on a jog, good distance from home, plus a paddle. I couldn't have asked for a better person to be with me, my husband, encouraging and offering lots of help. Not that I took much; I'm stubborn, stupid.

Now I am resting, just as God wants me to, and the good of the twisted ankle is coming through—I have seen a friend, I have had another friend bring me a support boot, I have stopped moving and caught up on bank books, emails, wrote a couple of cards, relaxed and slept. I read and read my Bible; it has been a while since I have stopped.

I don't do "stop and rest" very well. I like to think too much. But for me, if I don't stop and listen I don't hear God's plans. So now I have to stop. Was the twisted ankle a bad thing or a good thing? It could have been much worse, so I like to think this is a good thing.

So now I pray that the stuff in my life is set aside so that I can hear God's voice, and can listen to the words that are spoken to me. Be open to God's plans for me. I think that often the only time I listen to or call out to God is if there is a major decision I have to make or an important step of faith that I want to take. It's not in the daily tasks that I hear or ask for His guidance. Yet why not? If I start each day in prayer, I know from past experience that it makes a huge difference to the outcome of my day—not because it was perfect, but because I handled each situation better, I had a kind and gentle heart, and I didn't anger right away. Most of all, I was slow to speak. All things that God teaches us to do again and again.

"My presence will go with you and I will give you rest" (Exodus 33:14).

Interesting. When God is with us, we have the rest we need. I had forgotten this, truly forgotten. Rest doesn't come from stopping our work or from a twisted ankle; it comes from God. It comes from us listening to Him, hearing God's voice anywhere at any time, remembering that He is with us. I am excited by this very thought. It feels like I have heard it for the first time, yet it is not. It's simply been a while since I have stopped to listen and heard God's voice. How silly of me ... and now how rested I feel.

Thank you, Jesus, thank you.

Jody Malm was raised in the Cariboo region of British Columbia, where she lives with her husband. She has two grown children and three grandchildren. She belongs to the Sheridan Lake House Church and wears a smile on her face, "not because life is easy, but because God is good and I'm thankful."

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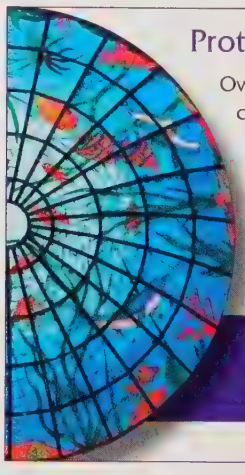

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THINKSTOCK

BE CHURCH

Connecting the Unconnected

Using technology to build up the body of Christ. By Bruce G.W. McAnsh

John Smith (not his real name) has been a member of our congregation for nearly 40 years. In recent years, the debilitating nerve and muscle disease he has been suffering with has progressed to the point that John can no longer make it to Sunday service. John's wife, Sally comes out when she can, but as his primary caregiver, there are many weeks when she too cannot make it to church. Both the Smiths want to know what's going on in their congregational family and equally want to participate in weekly worship, but there had been no work done to solve this for them.

This situation is an increasingly common description of many congregations across the country. As people age, they often become unable to physically attend the worship services they have so loved and been very much involved with over the years. These same people still have much to offer to their congregational family, but physical limitations prevent them from participating actively. The challenge has left this growing group feeling left out—until now. Computer technology has advanced enough that this marginalized group can now be a "virtual" part of any congregation that has basic Internet services, a computer, a digital projector and a smartphone.

We recently piloted a test in our congregation here at Burlington East to reconnect the Smiths, integrating them once again into our weekly worship services. It's part of a phased introduction of very simple technology found in many of our churches today. The first phase of this test was to take an existing tradition in our congregation and modernize it. Every Remembrance Day service for years, ›

BE CHURCH, continued

John Smith has given a dramatic reading of *In Flanders Fields* at the opening of our worship service. His wife, Sally, would then read a reply to the poem. The Smiths look forward to this each year and the congregation equally look forward to their moving presentation. This year, since John cannot make it to the service, I took my iPad to his home and he and Sally read their poems while I recorded it on the tablet. This was then projected on the screen during the service. Simple. John and Sally now have a voice, a face, and are active in our worship service once again. They no longer feel left out of the congregational family.

The second phase is to once again go to the Smiths' house with my iPad, but this time using the program, Facetime. It is a way to video call anyone on the Internet. (Skype accomplishes the same thing.) With another iPad at the church connected to our digital projector, John can both be seen by the congregation and can see the congregation from his home. Since congregants read scripture on a weekly basis, John can now be "live" during our service, reading the biblical texts right along with us.

The last phase of this will be pre-recording all of our "shut-ins" reading scripture, as not all of them are ready to "go live" just yet. Now all those in our congregation who have had to wait until the minister comes around for a visit can be a part of the weekly services. They are connected or more specifically, reconnected with the church and the church with them. This is part of a bigger plan to record our services, place them on a private YouTube channel, and enable everyone to see their loved ones on a weekly basis.

The important thing to remember is that this allows our aging or ill congregants, those who feel left out and marginalized, to reconnect through the use of technology. Digital projectors have found their way into many of our churches, but so often we use them only to project lyrics and sermon notes. There is so much more that can be done with these existing resources that go well beyond songs and notes. With a little creative thought we can make much better use of this equipment to bring our congregations together, worshipping as the body of Christ.

Rev. Bruce G.W. McAnsh is the minister at Burlington East in Burlington, Ont. He previously worked in the computer field for more than 25 years.

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THINKSTOCK

MINISTRY

Expect the Unexpected

Ten things I learned when our church started a second service.

By Greg Davidson

Five years ago, Briarwood, Montreal, decided to start another worship service. And we went at it Presbyterian-style: We planned. I's dotted. T's crossed.

We had flowcharts, personnel plans, updated worship assistant schedules, details on how to count the offering, including whether or not to separate it from the other service's offering (we didn't), a roster for opening the church, notes to contact the coffee coordinator, and a whole page on a new order of service.

On the journey there have been many things we did not plan for and many lessons learned. Here are 10 things we learned when our church started another service.

1. IT GENERATES THE UNEXPECTED.

I did not expect that there would be so many who would volunteer to use their gifts, including musicians, band leaders, seniors to teach Sunday school and hospitality coordinators to organize the now monthly post-service lunch. I didn't expect how many new leaders in the church would come from the new worship service: elders, board members, children's faith program teachers, prayer group members, committee workers, ministry partners, youth, children who invite their friends into ›

MINISTRY, continued

church. I also didn't expect how many people would come and stay and want to grow together.

2. IT PROVIDES AN ENTRY POINT.

People in the community looking for a connection or a re-connection to church felt happy to come. Walking into an established group and feeling that you belong is hard for most people. At our new second service, people freely came and took ownership of it quickly.

3. CHANGE IS NOT FOR EVERYONE.

Any transition in a church can be tricky. But by God's grace and credit to the founding service, most who were there when the other service started see themselves, I hope, as positive, faith-filled pioneers. Risking change, though not everyone will embrace it, is part of the church.

4. JESUS CHRIST PROVIDES PERSONAL CONNECTION.

Presbyterians pride themselves on the cerebral. Our worship tends to rely on thinking and for good reasons. Once a month, at the new service, someone talks about God in their life. I learned that as a pastor I could talk until I was blue in the face about how much Jesus loves you, but when someone else stands up and shares personally from their life how they have experienced suffering and healing, mercy and grace, the listening and learning reaches a whole new level.

5. IT IS EASY TO TRY NEW THINGS.

Maybe you remember being in long meetings about whether or not to have a hymn after the sermon, or share the peace of Christ, or change the way the candles are handed out on Christmas Eve. One thing about starting a new service is that everything is new so you can easily be creative and try new things. For example, at the new service we offer Communion by intinction. Excellent idea. I also invite people to bring their coffee into the service. Great. We use bilingual French/English opening prayers and psalms. Perfect. When everyone is new, there is no set way you are disrupting. The flip side is that it can take longer to build in traditions that ground us. Either way, starting another service can create freedom for worship expression and creativity.

6. THERE IS GUILT.

As pastor, has my energy and time been taken away from those in the founding service? Have the changes in how my week is shaped—reduced home visiting, increased coaching of leaders, and lots of Sunday preparation—been accepted by everyone at the church? Adding another service means more than another 60 minutes a week. It is wonderful, and it is everything that goes with creating something new. Not being sure that everyone understands that causes me some unease, as though I've let some people down. Gladly, we have a God that we can all trust from the bottom of our hearts!

7. YOU NEED SPACE.

The church where I worship doesn't have sprawling, cavernous basements, a huge sanctuary and off the charts heating bills. And this is a good thing. But one thing I have learned is that another service (and more staff) means more space. Space, and how we use it, has been a stressor. How do you incorporate an extra 60 people and two services into the same space? There was one stretch where we discussed space at almost every meeting. We now know that it is hard to have Communion at both services the same day because the kitchen is crammed with Communion cups and coffee filters. We now know we need a space committee (enrolment is out of this world).

8. YOU NEED STAFF.

People saw the need for more staff if we were going to serve more people. Thank God, we raised enough money for a full-time children and youth director. As more children and families have become a part of the church we have someone there just for them. To connect, encourage and invite. Without that extra staff person it would be frustrating for new families and church leaders to make these connections and find ways to serve and grow.

9. KEEP FOCUSED.

Even today, five years later, I hear comments along the lines of "I'm glad we started that service—where would we be without it?" Well, it doesn't matter. We started it as a mission, as a blessing, as a way to welcome people into community and God's kingdom. It was not ever for Us. Strangely though, in a God-way, the whole thing has actually flipped to become a blessing to the whole church.

10. GOD IS A GENERATIVE, CREATIVE, GRACE-CENTRED GOD.

You learn something about God when you try something new. The Psalm writers sing new songs. Isaiah hopes for a new thing. Jesus describes a ministry around new wineskins. John sees a new heaven and a new earth. I have learned that in risking something new or creative, God's grace comes to the fore. Probably because in those moments of risk, we need it so badly.

I've learned that I want to enjoy the grace of the generative, creative, loving God every time I see it. In the established and in the new. I am thankful to God and to the church I am in for reminding me of that.

Rev. Dr. Greg Davidson has a PhD from the University of Cambridge and is pastor at Briarwood, Montreal, Que.

THINKSTOCK

MISSION

Remembering Them

Pastoral care among Quebec's senior citizens. By Kosta Theofanos

"Many whom God has, the Church does not have; and many whom the Church has, God does not have" (St. Augustine, *De Baptismo*).

Though the church is no longer the dominant public voice in Quebec, pastoral care to seniors represents an emerging and authentic ministry.

St. Andrew's Home, where I serve as chaplain among seniors living with memory loss, is a badly needed, publicly managed residence in the bosom of Notre Dame de Grace in Montreal. Its mission of compassion and hospitality was broadened before my time to include convalescing non-Presbyterians. This suggests Presbyterian distinctiveness is about the relationships of faith we enter rather than the ›

MISSION, continued

She shared with me the pain of her decision to marry outside of her denomination against her parents' wishes, and remained devoted to her church. Her dying words were: 'No one has ever asked me about that'

specific title.

Envisioning St. Andrew's Home as a ministry which belongs to God is not easy when a presbytery must follow in the way of costly grace. We discern Jesus' cross by surrendering our need for past glory. Douglas Hall, in *Negative Theology*, made an important observation of the Reformed tradition: "The true church—the company of the Elect as Calvin called it—is known only to God. It is the creation of the Holy Spirit. It cannot be ascertained by human beings, however learned or authoritative. One believes—one hopes, one acts as though!—the true church is found also among the membership of the church visible but no ecclesiastical body can identify or name those who have truly been touched and transformed by the *testimonium Spiritus sancti internum*."

I believe the ministry of God's inclusive love flows from the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit, who corrects notions of election that have degraded into elitism as an outgrowth of fear and anxiety. Such feelings are common in memory loss and lead to meaninglessness and a general de-rootedness. The gospel calls us to empathize with the fragmentation of memory and the lives in need of communion with the Living Word, to whom we point as the Spirit makes the words of scripture come alive. This should lead our seminaries to prepare candidates for team ministry in spiritual care of the aged, desiring to hear their identification with the fragmentation in Jesus' cross and hope for resurrection life as we "do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19).

Such service dignifies the lives of our seniors and extends to relationships in residence. A pastoral presence was important to Catherine W., who came to the Presbyterian Church from the Baptist confession. She shared with me the pain of her decision to marry outside of her denomination against her parents' wishes, and remained devoted to her church. Her dying words were: "No one has ever asked me about that." Then she sighed, "You came into my life too late." I read her favourite scripture, prayed with her and pronounced a blessing. She died peacefully that night.

Our orientation toward a hope-filled future requires that we recognize our present as lacking fulfillment (see *Waiting for Gospel* by Douglas John Hall), and as we struggle with questions of authenticity and what we mean by "the tradition." This painful struggle may bear fruit as a gift from the Lord as we listen to and accompany the aged in their spiritual need to tell their stories.

I wish to encourage others in their ministry among seniors, assuring them that the Spirit of the Crucified One can transform their and our own anxiety and meaninglessness into hope. Jesus' call to "Do this in remembrance of me" comes to life as we become part of the living memory of our seniors.

Kosta Theofanos is chaplain at St. Andrew's Home, Montreal, Que.

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PRINT IS DEAD

Information sharing lives on.

By John Longhurst

Last year *The Mennonite,* the magazine of the Mennonite Church in the USA, published a press release about the resignation of its editor, Everett Thomas.

In the press release, board chair Barth Hague recognized Thomas' contributions and added, "During [his] tenure as editor, *The Mennonite* has grown from a print magazine to a content distribution system for Mennonite Church USA."

"Content Distribution System." That was the first time I had heard that phrase. So I called Hauge, vice president for university relations and chief marketing officer at Wichita State University in Kansas. ›

THINKSTOCK

"We're transitioning from being a magazine to a content distribution system," he said of how *The Mennonite* offers a traditional print magazine, website, blogs, podcasts, video and a weekly information e-mail called T-Mail.

"The traditional methods of sharing content are waning—it's rapidly becoming digital now," he said. "The media are being transformed."

And it's not just the media, he continued. "The audience is also being transformed. The way they access content, participate with content providers. They are moving away from buying content to accessing it and interacting with it."

On one level, it seems to be working for *The Mennonite*. Visits to the website are growing, as is the circulation of T-Mail.

On another level, however, things are still challenging.

Like many publications, *The Mennonite* can't get people to pay for online content. And advertisers don't want to pay top dollar for ads on websites—or even buy any advertising at all.

Despite the challenges, Hague says change is unavoidable. Circulation for print magazines is aging and declining.

"The number one reason for losing readers is death," he stated of the publication's declining circulation. Those print readers "are not being replaced."

I found a similar message on *The Guardian's* media blog. "You're not, in any traditional sense, editing the news," wrote veteran journalist Peter Preston about the role of editors today. "You're an intermediary-cum-overseer, manipulating it to best effect, steering rather than decision-making."

According to Preston, journalism today, "via web or app, can still be fine and probing, but it cannot be edited in any strict sense, any more than TV cable news churning day and night. The digital age, he went on to say "is making editors redundant."

According to Cindy Royal, a professor of journalism at Texas State University, all editors are techies now. "If you are a journalism educator or media professional, I have news for you," she says. "We work in tech."

That's not what editors and reporters signed up for when they entered the profession of journalism 20, 10, or even five years ago, she went on to say. But things have changed.

'You're an intermediary-cum-overseer, manipulating it to best effect, steering rather than decision-making'

"While some of the tenets of the profession we formerly knew as journalism have remained, workflows, business practices, participants, and competitors are all very different," she says.

"Internet and web technologies don't just represent a new medium where print and multimedia can live in harmony. The ways we communicate both personally and professionally have been profoundly altered. Communication is technology, and technology is communication. That's the true convergence."

This is not the first time the world has experienced a communications revolution. As Elizabeth Eisenstein noted in her book, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, people 500 years ago struggled to understand and come to terms with the unsettling changes wrought by Gutenberg and his invention.

It took about 100 years for the full impact of the printing press to be felt, she concluded. During that time, jobs were lost, whole new jobs and industries were created, and institutions and belief systems were challenged and changed.

It was, she wrote, a chaotic and uncertain time—a time much like today. The big difference between then and now, though, is the speed at which the change is occurring. This time it won't take 100 years. But the uncertainty is the same; nobody really knows what is coming next.

Clay Shirky is one of the leading experts on the effects of the Internet today. Reflecting on the changes happening in the world of communications, he says: "During revolutions, the old stuff gets broken faster than the new stuff is put in its place. The importance of any given experiment isn't apparent at the moment it appears; big changes stall, small changes spread. Even the revolutionaries can't predict what will happen."

One thing is for sure: Print is no longer going to be the main way people share information. The respected Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Southern California predicts that, due to falling circulation and advertising revenues, most print newspapers in North America will not exist in five years.

Closer to home, editors of church publications are a bit more optimistic. Over 40 per cent of members of the Canadian Church Press say their print publications will not exist in 10 years—so there's a bit more time to hold a paper magazine in your hands.

The *Presbyterian Record* doesn't see itself disappearing anytime soon, but it is facing the same challenges. Subscriptions are declining through attrition; advertising revenues are also falling. Costs, however, keep increasing. What can the board and editors do for this new digital future?

1. Remember what business it is in: Church newspapers and magazines are not in the publishing business. They're in the information sharing and community connection business. Publishing just happens to be the most effective and economical format since the birth of the printing press.

Web sites and social media are a way to share information, certainly. But that can't be all. Instead of publishing content, in paper or online, magazines could itinerate speakers, set up neighbourhood salons, hold symposiums and conferences, make videos or do podcasts. All of these things involve communication, and none of them involve printing.

2. Ask the right question. The need to share and communicate information will always exist, but the need for physical books, magazines or newspapers may not.

Figuring out how people in the church will communicate in the future is the key for the newspaper, magazine and book industries. But finding the answer starts with asking the right question.

3. Stop thinking about publishing schedules. Publishing schedules were set up for the convenience of the publication and the publishers and editors—not the readers. The Internet has flipped that on its head.

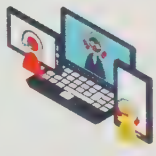
Today, if an article is finished, it can be released to the public immediately. The idea of making people wait a month to hear what happened at a conference or convention is now completely archaic. It's a sure path to a different kind of ruin—the ruin of irrelevance.

Today, when people can tweet about events in real time, nobody wants to wait days or weeks or longer to read a summary of what happened.

4. Use social media to find solutions. Quirky is the name of a new company that builds products dreamed up by amateur inventors. From its office in New York City, it invites all sorts of slap-dash doodlers from around the world to send ideas for overcoming challenges and problems—no matter how strange, weird or fantastic. Quirky then takes the best ideas, giving them to skilled engineers who take them through the design, manufacturing and distribution process.

This new way of solving problems is called "combinatorial innovation"—taking the idea of crowd-sourcing beyond its traditional use of raising money and using it to create new products. As one of Quirky's founders put it: "There are tons of creative ideas out there. The greatest thing about digital technology is that it's easier than ever to get lots of eyeballs looking about our biggest problems."

What if publications acted like Quirky? Opening up the conversation about sharing information could be a game-changer—not just because there would be more shots on goal, but also because they would come from surprising angles and from people no one expected.



5. Finally, make sure the church is part of the conversation. This isn't about the future of the *Record*; it's about the future of communication and information sharing in the Presbyterian Church in Canada. The fate of both are inextricably linked—the health of one impacts the other. How does the church want to build community? How does it want to hear from its members? How does it want to be a witness to the world? How can a healthy *Presbyterian Record* help that happen?

Looking ahead, the situation that publications like the *Record* find themselves in today reminds me of the old joke about the traveller who is lost in rural Ireland. He stops a farmer and asks: "How do I get to Dublin?" Replies the farmer: "Well, if that's where you want to go, I wouldn't start from here."

But here is where we are. Where we go next is anyone's guess.

John Longhurst is director of resources and public engagement for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

How is the Presbyterian Church responding to these changes and helping congregations do the same? Watch for a story that explores these questions by the PCC's Barb Summers in a future issue of the *Record*.

beyond words

Art can help us enter into the mystery of faith.

By Andrew Faiz

If you needed another metaphor for where the Church and the faith it espouses fit into the world today, you could have joined the throngs at Art Toronto last October. More than 20,000 people trekked through a massive convention centre looking at thousands of paintings from hundreds of artists.

Christian Worthington, right, at Rosedale Presbyterian, Oct. 18, 2014.

Like any such fair, whether for cars, boats, home décor or sports memorabilia, the art extravaganza is exhausting and overwhelming. Visual presentations in a wide variety of media, in all shapes and sizes and price ranges, are there to see and buy. There is something vulgar about the excess—as there is of our consumer society—and something exciting. So many works of creativity; yes some head scratchers, yes some egregious shocks, but for the most part, engaging and interesting.

One theme conspicuously missing was religion; there were some works that delved into the spiritual, but interestingly, not often through the tradition of Christian art. There were some that used Christian iconography or the tropes of Christian art, but often in a critical or ironic mode.

Western art, historically entwined with the Church, has moved on to other themes. Or perhaps the Church has lost interest in the contemporary world. It's a chicken-egg debate but of this we can be certain: Artists today do not see the Church and its concerns and themes as interesting subjects for their explorations.

Not all, of course. Christian Worthington was one of the artists on the convention floor. Based in Winnipeg, this was his first time at the Toronto fair, where he showed a few paintings for a secular audience. The previous weekend he had a show at Rosedale, Toronto, where he displayed nearly two-dozen works with overtly Christian themes and depictions.

I've known Worthington for nearly a decade. I first met him the summer of 2006 in Winnipeg where I had a play during the Fringe Festival. My play was housed in a storefront Alliance Church in the heart of the arts district. Coincidentally, Worthington had a few paintings on display at the church.

When I say church, that's what it was but it didn't look like any church I'd ever seen. It was a converted store; a large plate glass window at the front, with a door. You entered into a large room; two thirds of it filled with chairs; a third the sanctuary, which was also the theatre stage. The church was busy day-long. Young people, mostly artists, came through to grab a coffee, use the wifi and chat. Along with the Fringe plays there were other arts performances—music, dance, etc.—late into the night. That's where I met Worthington and we spent many hours talking about art and faith and how an artist experienced faith and how the church responded to art.

Eight years later we relived some of those conversations at Rosedale. (You can see a video of our chat on our website.) That street-level sanctuary provided Worthington a place to be a Christian and an artist: "It takes a very particular type of church to wrestle with artists coming to the table on a theological, spiritual level. Before I found this church, I wanted to be a part of a church community but I couldn't find a community that quite got me, despite their best intentions and my best intentions. I was talking about art and its relationship to a modern experience of Christianity."

> 'Before I found this church, I wanted to be a part of a church community but I couldn't find a community that quite got me'

Worthington, like me, and indeed all of you reading this, lives in a postmodernist world. That's a fancy word that began as a technical term but has come to define a worldview that distrusts, well, pretty much everything. No grand theories, no institutional or cultural designs. And what that means, in the end, is a deliberate consciousness about all aspects of life.

Postmodernism does not mean all things are relative; it does absolutely mean life is not a collection of assumptions. We have before us a vast body of knowledge, experiences and feelings. All of those are constantly at play and we make our life decisions by being aware of our surroundings.

Therefore, for many Christians in the pews there is a disconnect between their lives and their faith. Outside the church, in the postmodern society, traditions, customs and communities have been dismantled and rebuilt in new forms and shapes. Inside the church—well, in some churches—time seems to have stood still. This may be solace to some for whom the world has moved too quickly.

Paintings by Christian Worthington.
From left: Figures #2; Pilate Presenting Christ and Barabbas; Prophet With A Voice; #1337 (Abstract).

For others it is discomfort on all levels.

Or as Worthington states, "It wasn't just Michelangelo coming up with these things and everybody going, 'I don't get what any of this is about.' No, instead it was more, 'Okay, that's it. There is us.' It's expressing an age, it's expressing values. And there was an audience to receive it and to make sense out of it."

But no more. Worthington talks of presenting biblical stories in secular galleries. "What is this Abraham and Isaac?" people would ask. The images were no longer "us." The cultural language, which Michelangelo could take for granted, is now forgotten.

CHRISTIAN WORTHINGTON is a postmodernist thinker and a classically trained painter. He was very excited that his trip to Toronto included both a show at a church and in a secular setting. "I take showing art in a church very seriously. That's something very valuable to me. I see my work having two roles. I have a faith-based work set at Rosedale Presbyterian, where I talk explicitly about Christianity and culture and history. Then Art Toronto, which is a wide-scale cultural, mostly commercial event. The Christian arts have a very unique perspective."

I started our conversation at Rosedale by asking him to describe a painting of his I've had hanging prominently in my home for many years. (You can see it on page 39. The painting appeared on the *Record*'s April 2007 cover.) On his website the painting is unnamed and only described as Oil on Canvas, 15x25.

The bottom half of the canvas, the face of a man I've always presumed to be Christ, is described by Worthington as, "obviously influenced by certain periods of art history; Caravaggio and Rembrandt are basics of technical foundation." ›

For me the inner glow, the light that seems to come from within the portrait, is reminiscent of the old masters. But it is the top half, an abstract plane of red that gives the painting a deep resonance, something more than representation to something that feels like faith. The relationship between these two, the classical and the abstract, has intrigued me for many years.

"I was very much interested in mid-20th century abstract expressionist. They thought a lot about colour and what colour can do, removed from representation of function. Especially Rothko.

"Instead of making a painting about characters involved in something where jealously occurs, why don't we paint what jealousy looks like? That was their ambition. So from a religion point of view, why don't we paint something that captures the drama, the passion, and so for me, it was trying to draw these lines together. In some ways, this represents the non-figurative manifestation of God. And then the New Testament is the spirit meet flesh."

All that in oil on canvas no more than a quarter square metre. That is the power of a brush stroke. I joked to Worthington he was surrounded by Presbyterians who pride themselves not only on being people of the Word but also of words. We love words; we don't always appreciate images. We are an intellectual lot who don't always appreciate or understand the abstract. He responded to my joke seriously.

"Abstract artists have tried to make the argument, and philosophers have written, that music is the purest art form and the most removed. You can value an artist from just pure realism, but you don't judge a composer by his ability to produce sweet sounds or a cat singing or a car starting up. You judge his ability to create emotions and sounds that you never heard before. And the sounds create an impression and emotion that exists nowhere else in nature.

"And so when you hear Bach's Mass in B Minor, you don't go, 'Well, that doesn't sound like anything.' It sounds like something you've never heard before and that's the point. It's compositionally arranged so that it takes you on an experience that's unfamiliarly strange. It combines emotions, real life happens in emotional real time. Let's say something bad happens, like shock, fear, anger—you experience them chronologically. But great art and music combine emotions in a cocktail that you're not familiar with. Wonder and fear. It produces a strange sensation that only that particular art can give you."

I FOUND MYSELF STANDING FOR A LONG TIME in front of another painting at the Rosedale show. It was a large canvas with feather-like swoops of warm colours. The painting was calming. The colours were familiar—yellows and blues from the colour palettes of Christian arts I have absorbed by looking at hundreds of paintings over the decades, in books and galleries. (Later on, it doesn't take me long online to find the palette in paintings by Fra Angelico, Raphael and Rubens.)

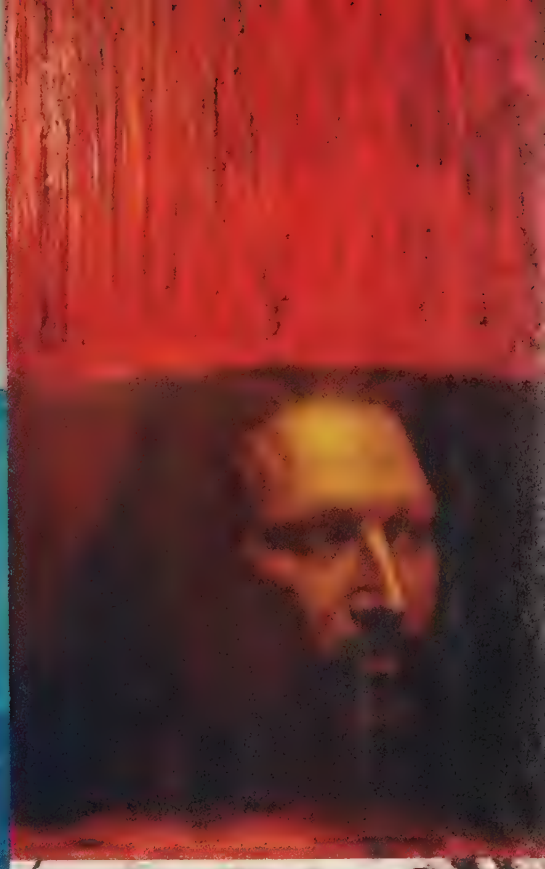
Standing in front of the painting, however, I wasn't thinking about the palette or Raphael. I was allowing the canvas to embrace me, letting the colours, the swoops, the strokes of a brush, carry me someplace. I felt helpless in front of that painting, as I often do in front of abstract works. Or as I do listening to Bach's Mass in B Minor. My joke to Worthington that Presbyterians are people who love words was really more a personal statement. I need words for everything; but not everything has words. Thinking in terms of music—brush strokes as notes—helps me get out of my own head into the art. It ushers me into the mystery.

That abstract canvas spoke to me of grace and transcendence. Those are the words that came to me but I can't tell you where they came from. I realize that canvas could have been at Art Toronto and a secular audience may have felt similar emotions without choosing those words. It could be a secular painting with a Christian palette, but it was a Christian painting that brought calm to the viewer. Perhaps that was what Worthington meant when he said Christian artists have a unique perspective.

THE ROSEDALE SHOW was called Anno Domini: Images of Faith for the New Century. That is the challenge; not just for Christian artists but all people of faith, followers of Christ. What are our images for the new century? For Worthington, instead of folding under the pressure of secular forces he views his art and his faith as moving against the grain.

"As a Christian, I'm accountable; I'm still interested in contemporary art. I'm in dialogue with it but I have certain values that are absolute and I have to work within those conditions and I have certain parameters, certain things that I will and won't do. I am trying to find the elaboration within those tensions.

"Showing my work in a church, this is an alternative venue. Like the way Impressionists rejected the salon and opened up their own gallery across the street and



weirdoes would come through it. Weirdoes by standards of the day; it's eclectic. You have to be a very certain person to find this stuff so interesting that you come into a church to see it. They have to have a very particular value in art, culture and all those things. There's a punk element to it."

That idea reverberated the next week as I walked through the endless corridors of a secular art convention. For all the aesthetic pursuits, and the myriad formats, for all the neo-Marxist critiques of consumer culture, for all the assertions of humanity, there was a curious ubiquity to the majority works. There was very little accountability or transcendence and without that reach towards grace many of the canvases and sculpture felt cynical. Plastic.

And that, I suppose, is the challenge for the faithful in the new century.

Andrew Faiz is the Record's *senior editor.*

#1934 (Abstract; Acrylic on Canvas); Unnamed, Oil On Canvas, 15x25; Mother and Child (Oil Bar on Paper).

FROM THE MODERATOR

Sovereign Grace

Principles of a Reformed theology. By Stephen Farris

You probably won't get good at using, say, computers, unless you learn the meaning of a few key words. It's not that different for being a Christian or, even, Presbyterian. We have to develop a core vocabulary. Through many years as a teacher, however, I have come to the conclusion that even some future ministers don't have a firm grasp of the meaning of many words we use regularly in the church. (If you catch me in a private moment, ask me about the time I put "consummation of marriage" on a definitions test at college.) So let's think about two key words, "Presbyterian" and "Reformed." "Presbyterian" is a description of the structure and government of our church. It means government by elders, both teaching and ruling, called and elected by the members of the church, gathered together in councils or "courts." That word defines who we are with respect to the structure of church.

By contrast, "Reformed" is the word for the core theology of our church. If I were asked, "What are the defining characteristics of Reformed theology?" I would reply, "An emphasis on the sovereign grace of God and the third and principal use of the law." Let's save the latter for another article and talk about the sovereign grace of God. We ought not speak about the sovereignty of God without simultaneously speaking of the grace of God. Still less should we speak of the related word "omnipotence" as an abstract attribute

What matters is that God has the ability to do what God wants to do, to reach out in love to all God's creatures

of God that can somehow be separated from the grace and love of God. Omnipotence without love sounds more like the devil than God, or to be more exact, it sounds like a devil's ambition.

Moreover, we can get stuck with trick questions such as, "Can God create a stone too large for God to roll away?" It doesn't matter what size stone God can roll away. What matters is that God has the ability to do what God wants to do, to reach out in love to all God's creatures. To affirm the gracious sovereignty of God is to say that God can do what is in God's nature to do. Our core affirmation, not just as Reformed Christians but as Christians of any sort, is that if we want to know God's nature, we look at Jesus. I think we would want to add that the Holy Spirit imprints that knowledge of God through Jesus on our hearts. When we look at Jesus, we are assured not so much that God is omnipotent but that God is strong enough to save. God is strong enough to roll away the stone from the tomb. God is strong enough to roll away all the stones that keep us from new life.

This leads to one more key word, "church." Where does that odd word come from? The French *église* is easy; it comes from the Greek *ekklesia*, which ultimately comes from the verb to call out. "Church" is harder. There are several theories, one of which is that it comes from the Greek word for "circle." In our day of "healing circles," that is an interesting thought. But a more persuasive explanation is that it comes from the Greek *kyriakou*. (You may hear it better in the Scots' "kirk" or German *kirche*. That word means, "of the Lord," or "the Lord's." The church, then, is the fellowship of those who have been called out to be the Lord's. And that Lord is strong enough to roll away the stones that keep the church from new life.

Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris is dean of St. Andrew's Hall at the Vancouver School of Theology.

WESLEY BATES/3INABOX

ST. ANDREW'S, OTTAWA
These are kids on a mission. Over the past year the children in St. Andrew's raised over $1,400 to help other kids. They're supporting a program of Presbyterian World Service & Development that helps girls in Afghanistan get an education. Way to go, gang!

People & Places

Find more online at presbyterianrecord.ca

Photographs can be uploaded at presbyterianrecord.ca.

LITTLE HARBOUR, N.S.
Four best friends celebrated the baptism of their four babies at Little Harbour Presbyterian on Oct 26, 2014. The new moms grew up in the church together and returned home for the occasion. It was a special Sunday for four generations of Presbyterians. Congratulations to all!

BETHEL, SCOTSBURN, N.S.
Congratulations to Rev. Lara Scholey, pictured here receiving flowers from Bev Jorden on behalf of a proud congregation. Lara received the distinguished leadership award from Knox College, Toronto, on Nov. 5, 2014.

THE OTHER SIX DAYS

Silly Searches

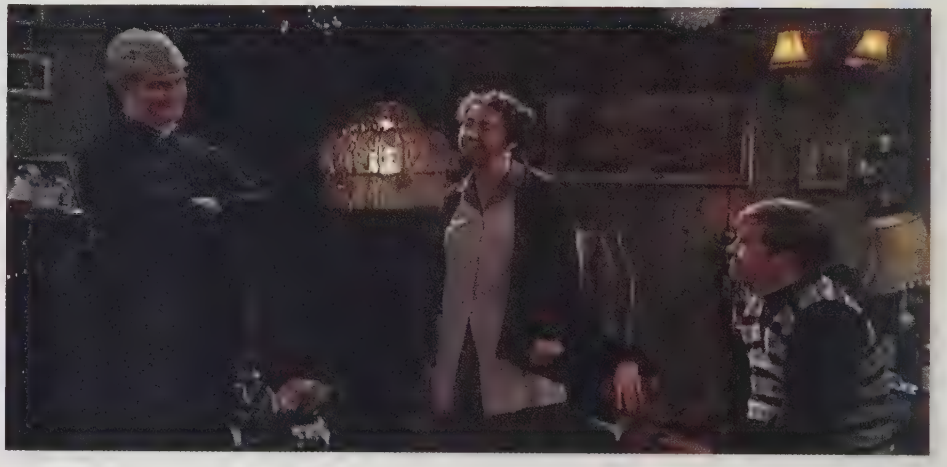
Looking for laughs online. By Bradley Childs

MUSIC

K-Love is a contemporary Christian radio program created in the United States. Its major broadcasts take place in New York, Chicago, Sacramento and Denver among many other large cities. But it's also now the sixth most streamed radio program online. If you are like me and you don't get Christian programming where you live, that's no longer a problem. Just go to klove.com, download the app to your computer and there you go. Or if you're a little more tech-friendly, download it to your phone (under "Contests" and then "Free Stuff"), connect to your car by bluetooth and listen to it while you drive.
FIND IT @ klove.com.

TWITTER

If you are on Twitter then you need to follow @LutheranSatire. They can be a tad harsh at times but they are also hilarious. Sometimes they are smart like with the tweet, "Praying in Jesus' name is good. But tagging that phrase on the end doesn't make a Christless prayer Christian." Sometimes they are cheeky, like when talking to Bill Burr and writing, "Lutherans believe in the same heaven as Catholics. We just think it's less popey." Other times they are biting, like when they tweeted, "Advent is the magical time of year when people skip church to put up Christmas lights." Follow these goons and it's sure to add a few seconds of pleasure to your day... or at least a good smirk.
FIND IT @ twitter.com.



Father Ted

T.V

Father Ted is a British sitcom. It is fairly similar to that old favourite, *The Vicar of Dibley*. In it, three Irish priests, including Father Ted of course, have been banished to the not so wonderful tiny community of Craggy Island. Sent there as punishment for various reasons, the three now live together with their housekeeper, Mrs. Doyle. There they live out their lives through a series of misadventures, all the while competing with nearby Father Dick Byrne who serves as Father Ted's greatest adversary. The show never aired in Canada, ended in 1998, and only filmed 25 episodes so don't be surprised if you've never heard of it. However, it's worth checking out now because it's good—and the whole thing is on YouTube for free.
FIND IT @ youtube.com.
Search "Father Ted."

COUNTDOWN TO WORSHIP

A few years ago while visiting my parents' church, I was interested to see that there was a countdown clock on the video screens prior to worship. I found it a tad hokey but also inspiring that people were counting down the moments. And now the good folks at SermonSpire: Media For Your Message posted a video your church can use for a countdown of its own. It's an exercise video of dance moves with biblical names that were invented just for worship. If you have a dancing kind of congregation perhaps you'd like to try out moves like, "crush the serpent's head" or get jiggy with "Jacob's Hip". My first thoughts were, "This is real. This is really happening." My second thought was, "It costs $15?" Still, it's free to check it out without downloading.
FIND IT @ sermonspice.com

Rev. Bradley Childs is minister at First, Regina.

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Synod of Quebec and Eastern Ontario

No vacancies at this time.

Synod of Central, Northeastern Ontario and Bermuda

Amherst Island, St. Paul's; Half-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Karen Bach; 613-353-1033; karen.bach@utoronto.ca; www.stpaulsamherstisland.com.

Brampton, North Bramalea; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Geoff Ross; 905-451-1723; geoff@standrewsbrampton.ca.

Erin, Burns and Ospringe, Knox; Two-point charge, full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Harvey Self, PO Box 276, Orangeville, ON L9W 2Z7; 519-941-1334; office@tweedsmuirpresbyterian.org.

Mississauga, Erindale; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Kristine O'Brien, c/o Trafalgar Church, 354 Upper Middle Rd. E., Oakville, ON L6H 7H4; 905-842-2800; trafalgarchurch@bellnet.ca.

Toronto, Glenview; Full-time senior minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Robert Faris; c/o St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, 73 Simcoe St., Toronto, ON M5J 1W9; 416-593-5600 ext. 229; b.faris@standrewstoronto.org.

Uxbridge, St. Andrew's-Chalmers; Full-time minister; Interim Moderators Hugh Donnelly and Rev. Dr. Lynda Reid; 814- 25 Cumberland Lane, Ajax ON L1S 7K1; jlreid@bell.net.

Synod of Southwestern Ontario

Bayfield, Knox; Part-time; Interim Moderator Rev. John Henderson, PO Box 824, Exeter, ON N0M 1S6; 519-235-2608; henderson.johncharles@gmail.com.

Hamilton, Central; Minister full-time; Interim Moderator Rev. Curtis Bablitz, 2138 Brant St., Burlington, ON L7P 3W5; 905-335-2640; minister@branthills.org.

Hamilton, MacNab Street; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Bob Geddes; 905-389-3001; bobgeddes@rogers.com.

Hanover, St. Andrew's; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Alex McCombie, c/o St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 20004, Hanover, ON N4N 3T1; 519-363-5392; standrews@wightman.ca.

Walkerton, Knox; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Owen Kim, 19 Brownlee St S., PO Box 526, Teeswater, ON N0G 2S0; 519-392-6955; maplemission@gmail.com.

Synod of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario

Winnipeg, Man., Kildonan Community; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Matthew Brough; 204-803-7743; matt@prairiechurch.ca.

Synod of Saskatchewan

Weyburn, Knox; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Bob Wilson; 2242 Goff Place, Regina, SK S4V 2T7; 306-525-3889; wilsonret@sasktel.net.

Synod of Alberta and the Northwest

No vacancies at this time.

Synod of British Columbia

Burnaby, Burnaby Taiwanese; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Glen Davis; gjidavis@telus.net.

Cranbrook, Knox; Senior pastor; Co-Interim Moderator Rev. Doug Johns, 117 Norton Ave., Kimberley, BC V1A 1X8; 250-432-9531; revdjohns@hotmail.com.

Richmond, Richmond; Interim Moderator Rev. Bruce Dayton, 705-5050 Halifax St., Burnaby, BC V5B 2N5; 604-277-5410; dbd99dbd@gmail.com; richpres.com.

Vancouver, Taiwanese; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Morgan Wong, 6137 Cambie St., Vancouver BC V5Z 3B2; 604-324-4921; pastor.morgan@vancpc.ca.

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obituaries

Jarvis, Rev. W. D. (Biff), died peacefully on December 1, 2014 in Tillsonburg, Ont. Biff graduated from Knox College in 1956 and served many congregations. He ministered at St. Andrew's, Tillsonburg, from 1977 until his retirement in 1995. He was a dedicated and active volunteer in the community. Biff is survived by his wife Jean (Hazelwood), five children, many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

FOR THE JOURNEY

A Radical Shift

Are we ready? By David Webber

A while back I received a document sent to me from my aunt. It was a very short handwritten letter from the district registrar in the Land Registry Office in Nelson, B.C. It was originally sent to my great-grandfather regarding property he owned. The district registrar who had written the letter had facilitated something or other for great-grandpa Charlie and was reporting on that service. As I look at the handwritten letter, what strikes me is its salutation. It is worded, "I have the honour to be, sir, your obedient servant." This is followed with the man's personal signature and nothing else, no officious title or anything like that. The document is dated Oct. 1, 1919.

I have received letters from all kinds of civil servants over the years. None of them have ever ended that way. Usually I am lucky to get a "yours sincerely." And of course the signature, which is quite often computer rendered, is overshadowed by the person's title which is long and often sounds like they are an executive vice president even when they are an office clerk. And the body of the letter is seldom reporting on a service preformed for me but more often than not it is threatening a service that will be performed on me if I don't get off the pot and bend over backwards to satisfy something or other the bureaucrat thinks I need to do to satisfy the needs of the bureaucracy. The body of the letter and its salutation is most often authoritative in tone and more than just a tad threatening. There is no doubt the servant is serving the bureaucracy and not little old me.

What has happened to the institution of government and its civil servants in just four generations? When did it become unfashionable, or worse, not required, for civil servants to serve the needs of the constituents of society rather than primarily serving the needs of the institution of government?

As I ruminate over this question I can't help but think about other institutions, too. There are many one could mention but since this is a church magazine, let's look at the church. Our Presbyterian Church is definitely an institution and its bureaucracy, made up of a hierarchy of church courts with their attendant committees, agencies and offices, is quite immense. Recently, in fact at the last two General Assemblies, there was a thrust to encourage—no, that's putting it way too soft—to legislate the church institution and the people who work within its bureaucracy to serve the local congregation and its missions in fulfilling the work of Christ. Whatever else this means, I take it to mean that all people who work within the church's bureaucracy shift their efforts from administration for the sake of the institution to service for the sake of the people and congregations in doing the mission of Christ. Not to put too sharp a point on it, it requires a major shift to a servant model of leadership. This does not require another institutional reorganization, of which we have had several over the past three decades in the PCC, but the much more difficult attitudinal shift in the people who work within the church's bureaucracy at all levels from national to local. What does this look like?

I am not one noted for hanging out at General ›

ILLUSTRATION: BARRY FALLS

Assemblies, but I did once, several years ago. The moderator at that particular assembly had the usual task of refereeing a great controversy over something or other that I completely forget now. But I will never forget this: An elderly woman had something to say on the subject, was very emotional and was having a great deal of difficulty wading her way through the usual dog-collared hubris that was knee deep in the place. When she did finally get to use the microphone she began to break down with frustration, nervousness and passion. She was completely unable to speak.

Suddenly it was as though there were only her and the moderator of the assembly in the room. I still don't know how the moderator managed it but in about one sentence he instantly changed the tenor in the room so that the woman knew, and every person in the room knew, too, that he was there to serve her, to encourage and equip and allow her to freely speak. It was amazing; it was Christ like. I was shocked to witness it in this context.

To me, that's what it looks like. It is in fact servant leadership. Howard Young writing in *Enrichment Journal* succinctly describes it: "Unselfish servant leadership refuses to rest on the inherent power of a position and desires to empower and release others for ministry. Servant leadership focuses on the needs and growth of those being led, not the needs of those who are leading."

What could it look like for us? There are a thousand possible examples that come to my mind that could apply to the Presbyterian Church's bureaucracy. Randomly chosen, here are just a few possible and theoretical examples that may already be happening.

It could look like a person in the Committee on Education and Reception going the extra mile to serve people who feel a call to serve Christ in ordered ministry instead of merely policing them by maintaining the rules of the General Assembly. Instead of, "you must do this," or "you don't qualify because of that" it could become "how can we help you fulfill your call?"

It could look like a person in the Life and Mission Agency who responds to a shrinking rural church that is having trouble with finances by offering to help in raising the funds, or perhaps even better, help by way of linking the congregation with a more prosperous church looking to support a mission directly rather than through Presbyterians Sharing, which they are already fully subscribed to.

It could look like a presbytery clerk who challenges the *Book of Forms* and the court rather than merely enforcing the rules, where there is good reason, so that a ministry or mission or person receives real help to fulfill their mandate for Christ. (I actually saw this in a rather neat way just a while back and it nearly blew my mind).

What the last two General Assemblies were wrestling with, I believe, is our church's penchant for seeking institutional health through structural reorganization and an increasingly top-down leadership approach. What was being looked for instead was servant leadership at all levels of the church through an attitudinal shift towards the example of Christ (John 13:12-17). What was expected was that persons in authority or persons working for committees and agencies of authority, from the local pastor on up through all the institutional structures, seek the mind of Christ to become servants of the servants of God (Philippians 2:5-8). I think this requires a radical shift. I wonder, are we really up for the change?

Rev. David Webber is a minister of the Cariboo, B.C., house church ministry.

A man holds a 'Stop Boko Haram' sign at he [illegible] of Kagida, the local offspring of the anti-Islamization movement in central Germany on Jan. 12, 2015

"Religious fundamentalism, even before it eliminates human beings by perpetrating horrendous killings, eliminates God himself, turning him into a mere ideological pretext."

—POPE FRANCIS, IN HIS ANNUAL FOREIGN POLICY ADDRESS IN JANUARY

CP IMAGES

My youngest daughter is more than happy to play with one or two toys. Would have been perfectly content to receive nothing for Christmas, playing happily with the dolls she already has. She had no interest in opening present after present, ignoring our continual requests to 'open another one!' My eldest was like this at her age—happy with one thing when those around her wanted to give her 20. Now, she wants the 20. Did we create this?

—AMY MACLACHLAN, ORDINARY RADICAL BLOG

DON'T MISS THIS NEW WEEKLY BLOG, CHRONICLING A SUBURBAN FAMILY'S ATTEMPTS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE @ **PRESBYTERIANRECORD.CA.**

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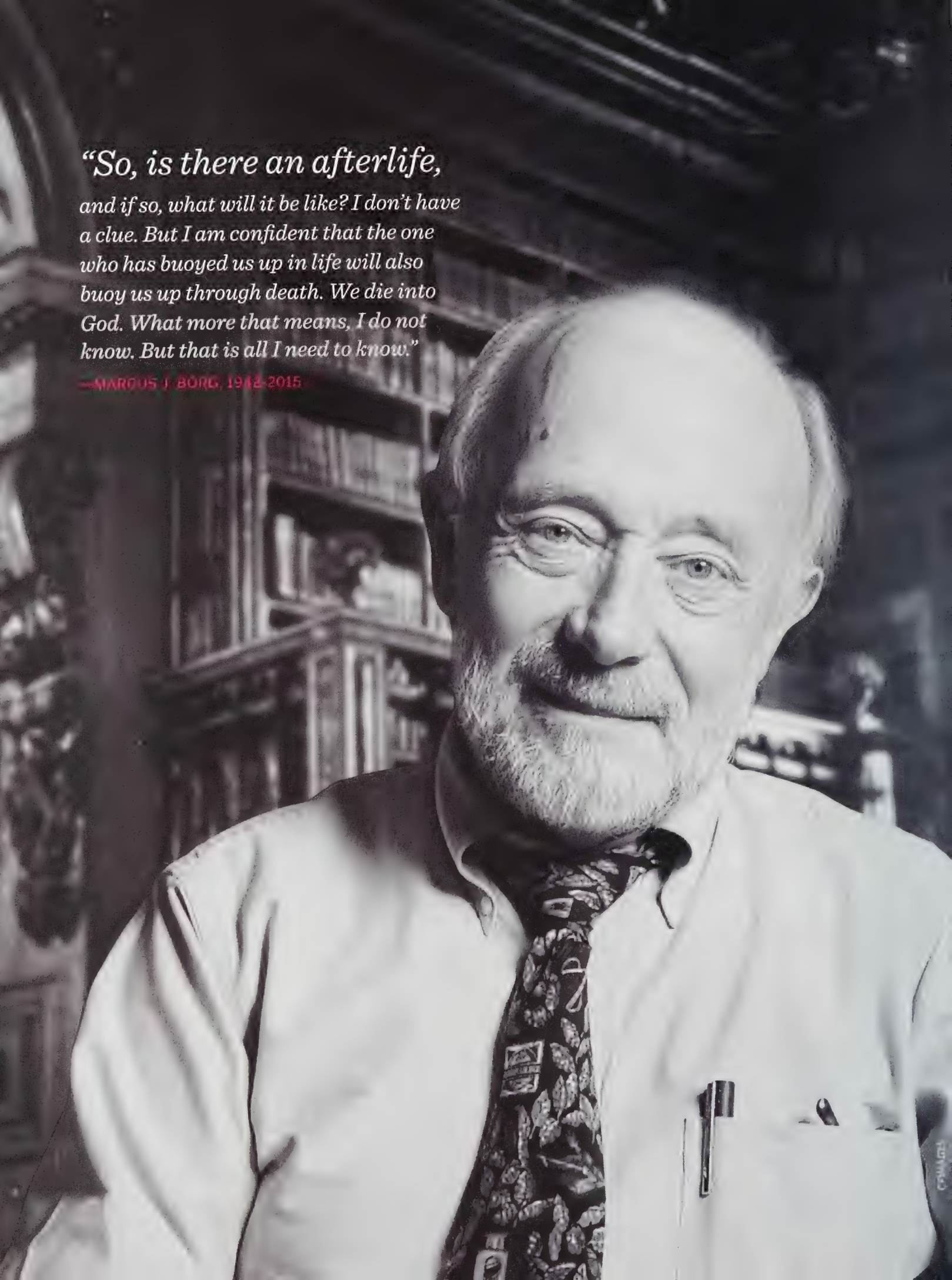

"So, is there an afterlife,

and if so, what will it be like? I don't have a clue. But I am confident that the one who has buoyed us up in life will also buoy us up through death. We die into God. What more that means, I do not know. But that is all I need to know."

—MARCUS J. BORG, 1942-2015

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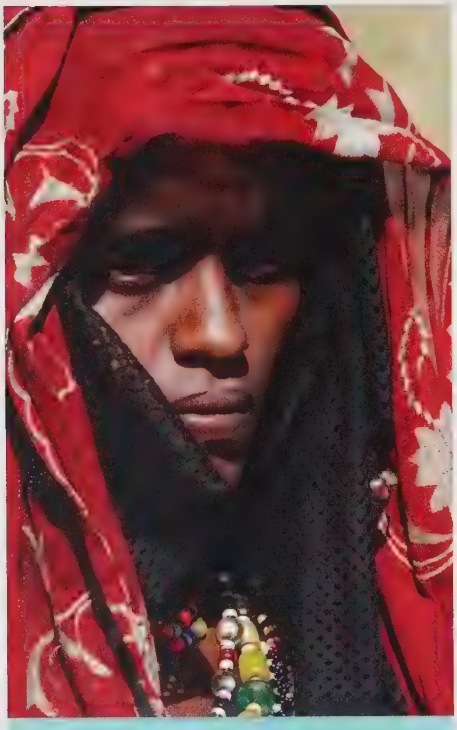
MARCH 2015



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FOR THE RECORD

Life and Death

With love and compassion. By David Harris

The Supreme Court of Canada has decided that Canadians may seek the assistance of a physician to end their lives. The decision itself raises many questions, answers few (perhaps deliberately) and has left it to Parliament to develop a law to safeguard the concerns of those who fear it is a slippery eugenics slope, while honouring the will of the vast majority of Canadians who say we have a right to die sooner rather than later when faced with an unbearable health situation.

The last ecumenical statement from Canadian churches was in 1996 (just three years after the last Supreme Court ruling). Roman Catholic and Evangelical representatives were active in intervening in this last case, but many other clergy were quick to post criticisms that were variously tendentious, supercilious or specious—and sometimes all three.

Nor were they alone—logic often takes a back seat when emotions come to the fore.

It seems pointless to review the ruling at this stage. Our goal now should be to help craft a law that aims to prevent abuses, however blunt an instrument the law may be.

One way forward is to see how much we agree on, which is likely substantial. Even those whose conclusions we disagree with may hold important perspectives we can and want to affirm.

We might begin by asserting that life in itself is good. People of every faith or no faith agree with that. Even when a particular life is abused or seems compromised from birth, we do not assert that life itself is bad. Rather, we all recognize that aberrations or exceptions are just that.

Even people who do not believe in an afterlife recognize that one doesn't exist without the other

We can also say that everyone recognizes that death is part of life. Even people who do not believe in an afterlife recognize that one doesn't exist without the other.

Further, Christians join Jews, Muslims and people of most other faiths in asserting that God, however God is conceived, is the creator of everything, and so the author of both life and death, as well as the gifts of reason and emotions.

Christians assert this particularly strongly through the doctrine of the Resurrection.

People of faith also join those of no faith in valuing compassion highly.

Christians believe God is Compassion, as evidenced by the Incarnation. Again, this is a central value shared with Jews and Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists and Jains, among others.

Compassion—which encompasses the concept of mercy towards those who are suffering—would seem to be at the heart of the approximately 80 per cent of Canadians polled by Angus Reid who support physician assisted suicide where a person "is in a coma with little or no hope of waking" and "previously specified they wished to have their life terminated if they were ever to find themselves in this condition" or "is terminally ill and will die in less than six months" and "is expected to suffer a great deal of physical and mental anguish during that time."

Which brings us back to where we started. The new law will have to take into account the wholeness of our humanity (life and death, reason and feelings) and the common values associated with that.

If we can all agree on that, surely we will have achieved something worthwhile.

David Harris is the Record's *publisher and editor.*

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Do Something!

Re Numbed and Helpless, February

Andrew, please wake up to God's Spirit and strength. I was so amazed and sad to read your pitiful article. There's nothing for you to do? Really? If that is so, please resign now, get some help/love and be open to renewal. Please! For our sake, for your sake, for God's sake and the health of the world.

Don't tell me there's nothing concrete that you can do. What about offering that young man sanctuary, getting in some trouble yourself for God's sake? How about leading a group of Christians in attending a local mosque? Do something; anything! But don't give us excuses and pretend that having fun with your family and friends as usual is the answer. How about leading a movement from within the church that challenges people to start living lives that take the world seriously, really challenging the powers of our culture that the "terrorists" are reacting against?

The Spirit of God is here, whether or not you hear and use her. The lack of leadership and discipleship that you show is yet another reason for the church to be not taken seriously. We deserve to die, the sooner the better.

Better yet, choose to live.

ANTHONY GIFFORD, STELLA, ONT.

All religions struggled with this question and have answered it in various ways. All are worth looking into. In India, poverty, misery and injustice are not only pervasive and predominant but also so blatantly obvious. The Hindu answer is withdrawal. Each person to his or her karma. You reap what you sow. Very reasonable answer to ›

LETTERS, continued

troubling questions. If one does not accept this then withdraw from the world itself—become a *sadhu* or a *sanyasi*. What we see is delusion or *maya*. The play goes on and on. It is unreal so better not get involved.

Buddha also gives a very practical answer. All misery and suffering is caused by attachment and desire. Try to become void of desires and all will be well. In other words cease to exist—become *sunya* or nothing. The Muslims and Jews believe in strict adherence to the prescribed law and great discipline. Do your daily prayers in the strictly prescribed manner; do the required fasting and pilgrimage and all is well. Marxists go the path of historical determinism and class struggle. Religion for them is the opium of the masses.

None of the above faiths deny the essentiality of good works and helping others. The Hindu scriptures note that kindness or *daya* is the essence of *dharma*. Islamic sharia even prescribes a certain amount of one's income to be used for *zakat* or charity. Buddhism says *karuna* or compassion is the highest virtue. The second of the three cardinal teachings of Sikhism is to share what you have with others (*bant chakna*). Adherents of the above faiths try to do what they believe to be charitable and good.

We Christians do more or less the same—go to church, read your Bible, give money to the church and charity and try to be good. But Faiz shows, though not explicitly, that we are really hypocrites. Hypocrites because we do not do what we are mandated to but, even more so, because we believe we can change the world and are the masters. We have to remember that Peter began to drown when he attempted to walk on water.

The other faiths have their own answers whether right or wrong. For a Christian, however, the question remains. Jesus does not like hypocrisy. He rebuked the Pharisees again and again. Christianity is a guilt-driven religion. We are the only ones who believe in original sin. So what is the solution? I do not think there is one. We have to accept that we are hypocrites and utterly dependent on God's grace. We cannot follow Jesus' example, though we should try. We, with some notable exceptions, cannot touch the lepers; cannot stop to listen to the cry of the blind man in the din of our busy life; cannot pray for our tormentors; we cannot love the way Jesus asks us to. So we go to Jesus and he redeems us. That is the essence of faith for me. There is no answer; there cannot be an answer. There is only a way out. The long journey of faith. There is no way out, only a way in.

"For ages you have come and gone courting this delusion. For ages you have run from the pain and forfeited the ecstasy. So come return to the root of root..." —Rumi

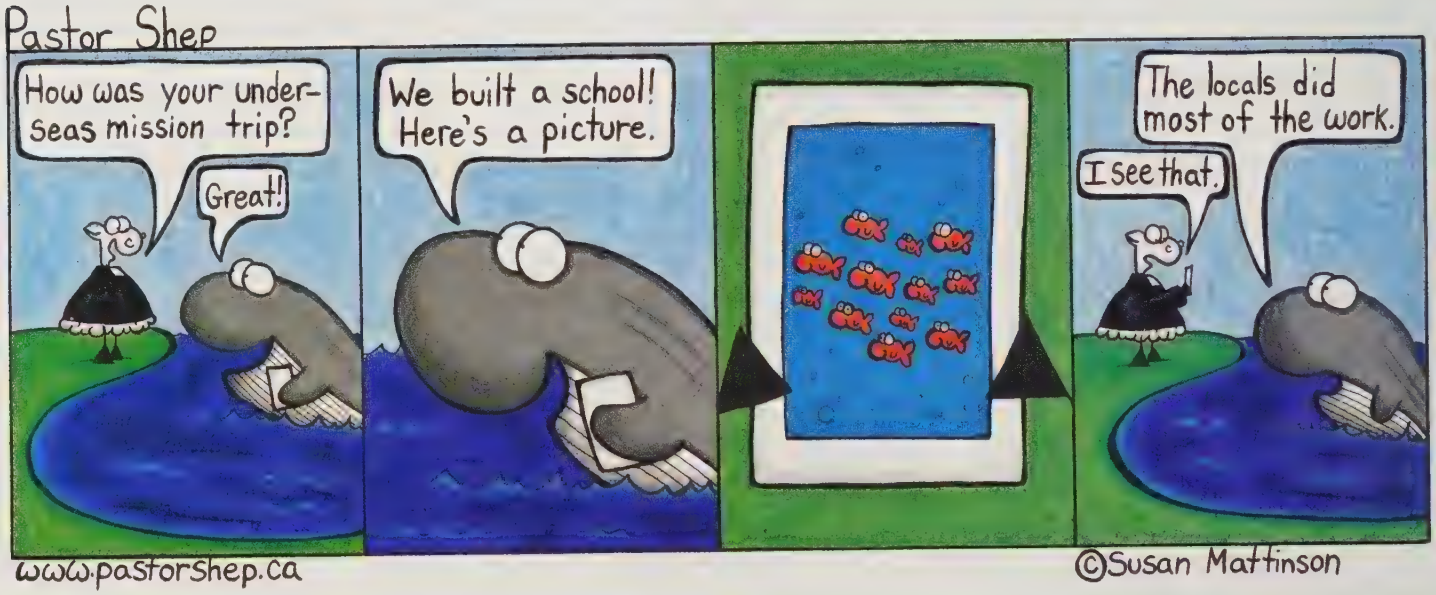
CLARENCE MCMULLEN, RICHMOND HILL, ONT.

Call the Sinners

Articles from January 2015 got me thinking again. Two in particular started me on a train of thoughts stretching back to the days of my youth.

First, the Renewal column, Start with Prayer.

I grew up on the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland in the 1930s and 1940s. In those days, New Year's Day was treated the same as the Sabbath; a church service in the morning



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and a prayer meeting in the village meeting house in the evening. Hebridean Presbyterians started their New Year asking for the guidance of God to carry them through the year according to His will.

Secondly, Can We Talk? The answer to that is, "yes," provided we start with prayer asking for guidance, patience and leadership. God created the human race and sent His Son down to earth to save them by his blood. He sent His Son to save them all, provided they all believed in him. *All* including LBGT—lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender. Let us stop hiding behind the alphabet what we need to talk about. God did send His Son to save them all along with us who also are sinners. Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick: I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.

MURDO SMITH, VICTORIA, B.C.

I'm on record as one who is and has been striving for full inclusiveness, for myriad reasons. What I'd like to address here though is the specific concern of those who think the move could cause congregational fissures and loss of members. Perhaps we ought to look at this from outside looking in; how many people will not even consider joining the Presbyterian Church because we aren't fully inclusive? Young people today (straight or gay) will not abide exclusiveness or bullying in any form. Let us fully embrace the LGBTQ community and stop the bullying!

PATTI THOMPSON, VANKOUGHNET, ONT.

Read It and Be Challenged

Re Posturing With God by Daniel MacKinnon

Daniel MacKinnon has written a practical book that explores our relationship with God in ways that most of us do not think about. It involves our posture. As he writes: "Our bodies communicate in non-verbal ways that have great significance in our relationships including with God."

Communication experts tell us that body language communicates about 37 per cent of all messages we send to others. Have you ever thought about the way your body communicates your relationship with God?

MacKinnon writes in a manner that will not only capture your heart but will enable you to see your story in God's story. Read it and you will be challenged and encouraged.

DAVID SHERBINO,
PROFESSOR OF PASTORAL MINISTRIES
AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION,
TYNDALE SEMINARY, TORONTO.

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POP CHRISTIANITY

Rest and Respond

We are the church. By Andrew Faiz and friends

I spent some time in January reading the 11 issues of last year's *Record*. Perhaps it was the frame of mind I was in but I noted a narrative that echoed from issue to issue. I'd like to share a few moments that made me stop and ponder.

"Rest and respond. Take time to be quiet again, resting and waiting in God's presence."
—Spiritual Disciplines, June, Phil Reinders.

"John Calvin viewed the means of grace primarily as word and sacrament. For me, when it comes to defining what I mean by means of grace, I have to confess I am more influenced by the other John (gasp!). John Wesley spoke of the means of grace as the way through which God works in deepening, strengthening and encouraging faith. The person of faith was expected to develop habits in practising the means of grace so as to open one's heart and life to God's working."
—For the Journey, October, David Webber.

"Sometimes I fear we've lost a whole generation of Eldads and Medads, people who speak words we need to hear, from outside the boundaries we work so hard to maintain. ... They had good reason to believe they were insiders, wherever they stood when the spirit fell on them. After all, God didn't stay inside the lines."
—Progressive Lectionary, June, Laurence DeWolfe.

"We tend to think of hope as only future-focused and as goal oriented ... And what this person helped me see is there are also all sorts of other ways to recognize hope ... So like the emphasis on meaning: a life lived as meaningful points to hope. Even survival ... just surviving, just breathing, the idea that breath itself speaks of life's possibilities."
—The Horizon of Hope, July/August, Pamela McCarroll.

"Not everything that's religious is Christian. The prophets of the Old Testament are railing against religion most of the time. Religion is their main topic of criticism. They're not there to support and keep religion going. No, they want God to be heard, not the religious authorities. So how can we help people in the pews to distinguish between these religious things that they're hanging on to ... and faith?"
—What Time Is It, May, Douglas John Hall.

"The Spirit moves, God blesses, Jesus reconciles and it is up to us to constantly renew our relationships, because, in the end, Church is an organic thing—it grows and dies, it has seasonal shifts, and yet, it is always alive and breathing. It can be overwhelming, but we have a lot of help in prayer if we want it, and the ride is a lot of fun."
—Defining Church, April, Andrew Faiz.

"At dinner our family asks some version of, what was the best part of your day? Where did you feel really good? What was the hardest part of your day? When did you struggle or feel sad?"
—Spiritual Disciplines, November, Phil Reinders.

"What if we shared glimpses of God in our lives the same way we share recipes for the perfect cupcake? Each of us has little moments in our days, times when a line from scripture or a sermon will surface and make ripples, when we will experience a moment of grace, or when God will give us a smack upside the head. It can be a great encouragement to know others have similar experiences, and it's always good to know there are people who can and will support you and the world with prayer. In an age of digital communication, I think we should take a page from Paul. When we're not gathered together in person, let's keep in touch."
—We Are the Church, February, Connie Wardle.

Andrew Faiz is the Record's *senior editor.*

BULLETIN

Community and World News

NDP justice critic Francoise Boivin reacts to the Supreme Court of Canada decision on assisted suicide following question period on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on Friday, February 6, 2015.

CP IMAGES

IN THE NEWS

Supreme Court Says Yes to Assisted Dying

What does the Church say?

By Amy MacLachlan

On Feb. 6, the Supreme Court of Canada unanimously ruled that physician-assisted dying is constitutional, and that denying a person this choice violates section 7 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the section that discusses a citizen's right to life, liberty and security.

The decision—which reverses the court's own ruling in 1993—set off a debate between those who agree with physician-assisted suicide and those who oppose it. The *Record's* website and Facebook pages have been host to lively and spirited discussions. (You can read a blog post by Rev. Matthew Ruttan titled, Assisted Suicide: Is it Ethical? Or Murder? Or Both? on our website).

But what are churches saying?

"The Presbyterian Church in Canada adopted statements on euthanasia and assisted dying most recently in 1994, 1995 and 1996," said Rev. Stephen Kendall, the church's principal clerk. "While these ›

statements do not accept the legalization of assisted dying, they reiterate our commitment as Christians to form caring communities that make God's love real for those who are suffering or facing death."

Kendall urged Presbyterians to read the reports found at presbyterian.ca.

The Anglican Church responded with a statement by its Primate, the Most Rev. Fred Hiltz. He referred to Care in Dying, a study adopted by the 1998 General Synod.

"Grounded in the hope we embrace as Christians, this document called for a renewal of the church's commitment to the provision of the best quality of palliative care in keeping with the dignity and sanctity of human life. ... [W]e bear witness to the possibility that human life can have dignity and meaning even in the context of the realities of pain, suffering, and death."

However, Hiltz noted that his church has "reopened the conversation," and a task force on physician-assisted death has been established. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada has "also renewed their engagement in this conversation."

Paul-André Durocher, president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, responded definitively:

"My brother Bishops and I entreat governments and courts to interpret today's judgment in its narrowest terms, resisting any calls to go beyond this to so-called acts of 'mercy killing' and euthanasia," reads the statement posted on the Conference's website.

"Helping someone commit suicide ... is neither an act of justice or mercy, nor is it part of palliative care," he continues.

The United Church has no policy on assisted dying and has not responded.

The Government of Canada has 12 months to respond to the Supreme Court's judgment, which likely means drafting new legislation in light of the court's ruling.

"I anticipate and hope that there will be parliamentary hearings so that the PCC has full opportunity to submit a brief," said Stephen Allen, general secretary of the church's Justice Ministries department. "The brief could state the PCC's opposition to doctor assisted suicide, and recommend criteria that could be included in any legislation."

Rev. Dr. Karen Hamilton, general secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches, an ecumenical organization of which the PCC is a member, encouraged people to re-read the council's material on euthanasia, adopted in 1996. "It was a substantive debate, and a deep one," she said. (Visit councilofchurches.ca for the report.)

Amy MacLachlan is the Record's *managing editor.*

STATEMENT ON ABORIGINAL SPIRITUAL PRACTICES RELEASED

A one-page statement outlining the denomination's stance on Aboriginal spiritual practices was released in February. It draws on the church's 1994 Confession to Aboriginal Peoples, *Living Faith*, and a conversation circle that worked on a theological framework for Aboriginal spirituality for the 2013 General Assembly.

Through its participation in the residential school system, the church "contributed to the banning" of indigenous spiritual practices and must "continue in humility to learn the deep significance of these practices and to respect them and the Aboriginal elders who are the keepers of their traditional sacred truths," the statement says.

Traditional practices, such as smudging, "are received as gifts and serve to enrich our congregations" when they are shared by Aboriginal elders, members or visitors.

Rev. Margaret Mullin, minister at Place of Hope Presbyterian in Winnipeg, said she wished the statement went further to "clearly state that the Church affirms that it is an acceptable practice to bring traditional Aboriginal teachings and ceremonies into 'The Church.'"

"After 15 years of teaching and gradually introducing the sacred Aboriginal wisdom teachings and ceremonies in the context of Christian worship, some of the members of Place of Hope Presbyterian Church are still under the belief that to follow Jesus they must forsake all else," she said. "These are Christian Aboriginal people, members of the PCC, who are reluctant, and even afraid, to participate in any of the traditional Aboriginal practices because of their historical belief."

Yet, she said, the statement opens the way for conversation, "gives leeway for self determination, and it highlights that the Church must be a community where all are respected and valued."

The statement was put together with input from members of Justice Ministries, the principal clerk and Moderator of the General Assembly, and members of the church's native ministries. *—CW*

NEWEST GHANAIAN CHURCH INSTALLS ITS OWN SESSION

On Jan. 25, Calgary's newest Presbyterian congregation ordained six members to the office of the ruling eldership and admitted them to session.

The Ghanaian Presbyterian Church, Calgary, began as a small community in January 2012, worshipping in a member's home. Rev. Frank Adu and elders from Ghanaian Presbyterian, Toronto, provided guidance, and on June 8, 2014, with 27 charter members professing their faith, GPCC was established as a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. An assessor session was appointed.

Six months after its official beginnings, the congregation was thrilled to install its own members to its governing body. (You can find a photo on our website.)

"We give thanks for God's faithfulness and for calling the church into being," said Rev. Dianne Ollerenshaw, former interim moderator. —*AM*

FRANCIS BOTHA/ACT/DCA

Malawi Floods Spread Disease

Heavy rainfall in mid-January caused flooding in southern Malawi, killing 276 people, devastating crops and livestock, sweeping away over 2,000 homes and displacing 230,000 residents, according to Unicef.

Mulanje Mission Hospital, a facility operated by the Blantyre Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian and supported by Presbyterian World Service & Development, has reported increased cases of malaria and severe diarrhea in the wake of the floods.

The Presbyterian Church's aid agency is gathering donations to help improve sanitation in the region by committing to rebuild at least 1,000 latrines, something the hospital has flagged as "an urgent health priority."

"A toilet isn't the first thing people think about with a flood, but they're actually really important," said Karen Bokma, PWS&D's communications coordinator. Flooding leaves standing water, which means waterborne diseases are an ever-present danger. Staff at the hospital are worried about the possibility of a cholera outbreak, she said.

A donation of $35 is enough for community health workers to build a new latrine. "It's very exciting to tell people for $35 you can make a big difference," she said.

Donations can be made through congregations, online at werespond.ca, and over the phone by calling 1-800-619-7301 ext. 291. —*CW*

Presbyterians Sharing Fund Receives $7.87 Million in 2014

The main mission and ministry fund of the Presbyterian Church received a total of $7.87 million from congregations and individual donors in 2014, exceeding its budgeted goal of $7.75 million but marking the eighth consecutive year of decline in contributions from congregations.

Congregations donated $7.3 million to Presbyterians Sharing in 2014 and provide the lion's share of the funding through voluntary allocations. Funding from congregations has fallen about 16 per cent since 2006.

Karen Platter, associate secretary for Stewardship, said many congregations have cited their mandatory contributions to the pension fund, increases in overall costs and declines in attendance as reasons they cannot meet their allocations. "The decline in number of congregations also affects the overall total given to Presbyterians Sharing," she said.

This year congregations were encouraged to contribute 10 per cent of their dollar bases.

Of the 893 congregations that contributed to the fund in 2014, 74 per cent contributed less than the 10 per cent suggested, while 26 per cent met or exceeded it. Compared to the amounts they contributed in 2013, about 67 per cent of congregations maintained or increased their contributions while about 33 per cent reduced their givings.

Individuals helped to buoy up the fund, with over $570,000 donated in 2014, including $435,000 from the estate of Marion and Bruce Berry of Thornhill, Ont.

Presbyterians also pitched in to support the work of Presbyterian World Service & Development, the church's aid agency, with $2.93 million in donations. Canadian Ministries and International Ministries, two offices that are supported primarily by Presbyterians Sharing, also received a combined $100,000 in donations for special projects. —*CW*

MISSION

The Little Church That Could

Celebrating a decade of community meals. By Amy MacLachlan

At St. Andrew's in Sutton, Ont., a town on Lake Simcoe, the congregation is small. Tiny even. However, it grows to nearly four times its size when considering the people who visit the church every Tuesday for a free community meal—a weekly event that celebrated its 10th birthday last month.

"This meal celebrated the serving of well over 45,000 suppers over 10 years, something we never could foresee when we first began," said Gayle Clark, an elder and meal committee member.

The 10th anniversary dinner was served in style by local celebrity chef, Neil Noseworthy, who has contributed his talents in the past. There were 85 in attendance, including the town's councillor and local media, with music led by elder Leo Teufel.

From the beginning, the meal has been a community effort.

"The ecumenical flavour of this ministry is exciting, and through it, we have developed meaningful relationships with our local Anglican and United churches," said Clark, mentioning that local businesses have also helped make this ministry possible. "Over the years, other churches in our area and within our presbytery have played a major role too, both physically and financially, and we thank them for their loving support."

The Presbyterian Church is no stranger to closing withering congregations that have lost members and no longer possess the drive or ability to continue. But St. Andrew's, Sutton, while small in official numbers, remains vibrant and devoted to its work.

"If we lament the fact that we are small and getting older, we miss the point," said Clark. "We as Christians can be effective as long as we still get passionate about the wonders God performs, not in spite of us but through us.

The congregation—including those who come for the meal—also supports a mission in Sierra Leone.

"A former moderator's encouraging words come to mind: 'When counting the butts in the pews, remember to include those who attend the meal.' Our guests unknowingly remind us of this regularly; when they are asked about their church connection, they identify with St. Andrew's."

Brenda Dickie, an elder and committee member, shared some of the wisdom she's garnered in the last decade:

1) "One woman joining us asked, 'Have they already said grace? Should I just say my own?' I assured her that she should do that, and went about being Martha, serving plates of food. Mary would have sat to pray with her. As we journey in our outreach, we learn that mission is not just about 'doing;' it's about 'being.'"

2) "One of our long-time guests has come a long way. She now shares with us her faith-based family roots, and as she shares her concerns for family, it's easy to see there is a seed of faith within her. I wonder if our persistent caring has managed to nurture that seed?"

3) "One gentleman is pleased to participate by saying grace, as do others, and another is eager to share a devotional story. They have found a place where they are accepted, and some have not encountered a lot of that."

"In looking back at an old report for our annual general meeting, we're reminded that 'the community meal feeds all of us, volunteers included,'" said Clark. "'It fills the need for companionship where people live on their own; it develops a sense of family for those who have none; it provides a brief respite from the harshness of the elements; and the gratitudes expressed fill our hearts and remind us why we've been called to this task. We are the hands and feet of Christ, and large or small, we are meant to feed His sheep.' It is a joyful duty."

Amy MacLachlan is the Record's *managing editor.*

PHOTOS BY GAYLE CLARKE

Faith.

Deepening your relationship with God

ISTOCK

LEADERSHIFT

Seeing What Others Do Not See

Developing an entrepreneurial spirit.

By Ross Lockhart

#ENTREPRENEURIALDISCIPLESHIP

At first glance, the Art Deco building in downtown San Francisco looked no different than any other in the trendy, hipster neighbourhood. Our party of four checked in at the front desk and with our shiny visitor ID badges were hustled into an express elevator to the top floor. The doors opened and before us whirled a sea of intelligent humanity— Twitter world headquarters.

#OVERWHELMED

Our vacation friends from church had a cousin who, at the time, was the chief legal counsel for Twitter and now advises President Obama in the White House. He greeted us and showed us around the ›

LEADERSHIFT, continued

I wonder what might it mean to be more entrepreneurial in the sharing of the good news? I returned to the Twitter wisdom, 'One must have vision to see what others cannot see'

open concept workplace—no private desks or even pen or paper. Employees simply showed up and found a creative space. A gourmet kitchen was set in the middle of the office—chefs standing by to fuel that entrepreneurial spirit through culinary magic! Everyone working there appeared to be 12 years old and a genius like Doogie Howser, M.D.

#FEELINGOLD

It was amazing to witness all this from a start-up company that began in 2006 and changed the world of communication in 140 characters.

Over lunch on the rooftop patio, I asked some of the employees about the success of the company that has grown to almost 300 million users worldwide. One bright young man, who probably picked up his doctorate from MIT before getting his driver's license, offered an opinion. "Most people think that entrepreneurs need to be risk takers," he said in an earnest voice, "but it's more than that." He paused for effect and leaned in close as if to share a secret. "Being an entrepreneur today requires one to have vision to see what others cannot see."

Last month, I suggested in the Leadershift column that our future pastors in the Reformed tradition must be evangelical, entrepreneurial and effective. We first explored evangelism—how leaders must be committed to the urgent sharing of the good news that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. But how we do that will look and feel different than in generations past. Our post-Christendom Canada means that Gen-Xers and Millennials (those veterans working for Twitter!), not only lack any social pressure to be involved in a Christian community, but, for an increasing number they also have no Christian memory.

I wonder what might it mean to be more entrepreneurial in the sharing of the good news? I returned to the Twitter wisdom, "One must have vision to see what others cannot see." It reminded me of John 11 where Lazarus dies before Jesus can reach him. Martha scolds Jesus for being late and reminds him that if the Lord had hustled, her brother would still be alive. Martha was about to learn, however, the truth that God may not show up when you want—but God's always right on time.

Jesus arrives late, weeps with those who are weeping but then does something no one expected. Jesus sees something the others do not see. "Take away the stone," the Lord commands. "No way!" comes the response. "He's dead and there's a stink." Undaunted, Jesus models some entrepreneurial discipleship—seeing life where others see only death. "Lazarus, come out!" Jesus says and the world is reminded once again that the strange rhythms of God's grace can turn any dying into a rising.

Many look at the mainline Protestant churches today and see only death. We desperately need leaders who can see life where others speak only of decay. Our American Presbyterian cousins have taken some risky steps to see life where others see only death. The PC(USA) has launched 1,001 worshipping communities (onethousandone.org) as a way of building Christian life together in a more entrepreneurial way. I've built a relationship with one of these new communities in Seattle called Union Church. They located the new ministry in a dead zone of Seattle called South Lake Union. They picked the spot after much prayer and conversation with Christian urban planners. Within a few years of setting up their ministry, Amazon picked that old neighbourhood to build their world headquarters and the whole area is thriving now. The ministry of Union Church is growing based on their risk-taking, entrepreneurial discipleship that had vision to see life where others only saw death.

Those of us who have studied or served in PC(USA) institutions know that the PCC is a smaller ecclesiastical shop. Even so, I wonder how our vision might be changed as a denomination, if we committed at the next General Assembly to fostering "101 new worshipping communities" across Canada. I would love to discover how God might be glorified if we could flip the script from focusing on death to declaring boldly, "Take off the grave clothes and let the church go!" #Resurrection.

Rev. Dr. Ross Lockhart is director of ministry leadership and education at St. Andrew's Hall, Vancouver.

PROGRESSIVE LECTIONARY

Palms and Politics

The story of Holy Week begins with a political act. By Laurence DeWolfe

Liturgy of the Palms
March 29, 2015
Mark 11:1-11 or John 12:12-16

All four gospels agree that Jesus rode into Jerusalem in a one-man parade. All agree the grand entrance was planned and staged, either by describing the setup (Mark) or declaring its revelatory purpose (John). Jesus intended that those in the know would hear echoes of prophetic voices. The parade signaled confrontation to come. Mark says Jesus went to the temple on a reconnaissance mission to prepare for the next day's events and the days to follow.

The story of Holy Week begins with a political ›

Jesus came looking and sounding for all the world like the one prophets said would restore true peace, real order, and God's government to Israel. That's what frightened the people who had power to put him to death

act. What do we do? We do what we do with Luke's story of Jesus' birth, a story that heralds a great social upheaval. We give the story to the children. And Palm Sunday becomes a children's procession. And then we move on to interpret all that follows spiritually.

There's no mention of children in either version of the story before us today. Parents know not to let the kids keep the long blades of grass that pass as palm fronds in our services. Someone might lose an eye. Read the story. Someone lost his life.

Jerusalem was overflowing with pilgrims from all over the land. The Romans were on red alert. Their tolerance of the chronically troublesome Palestinians was wearing thin. Pilate was there to do whatever he could to maintain control.

The priests and their staff had to carry off the biggest week of services in the liturgical year without a hitch. It was bad enough they had to serve the once-a-year crowd from up north. They didn't need one of them riding in on a donkey like a Messiah. There were zealots and crackpots enough in Jerusalem!

Preachers say Jesus was resigned to his death-with-a-purpose. Or he was eager to achieve his great, spiritual victory by dying for the sins of the whole world. He had a big job to do and was determined to take charge and see it done. We leave Sunday's story with the children and rush the adults to Thursday night and Friday morning. As if all those hard words, arguments, and provocations in between don't matter.

Stay with the story. Jesus didn't parade into the city to announce an impending atonement for all the world's sins. As John says, that understanding of what Jesus was about dawned on his disciples much later (verse 16). Jesus came cloaked in words and symbols that proclaimed release from real oppression, soon. Jesus came looking and sounding for all the world like the one prophets said would restore true peace, real order, and God's government to Israel. That's what frightened the people who had power to put him to death. Nothing he did and just some of what he said from Sunday through Thursday suggested he was about anything else. Agents of empire and guardians of pure religion don't fear prophets who proclaim a new world beyond this one. They fear preachers who give people hope of a better life in the here and now.

We begin this week ready to rehearse the great drama of the salvation of the world. Let's not forget that Jesus not only lived and gave up his life for reconciliation of the whole sinful world to God. He lived his life, according to all four gospels, in conflict with sin in and of the world in all its manifestations. He lived for people who needed to be reconciled to one another. He set a pattern for us, we who are both in and of the world, to live against all the manifestations of sin and for the reconciliation of all people. He was killed because of what he lived for. Let's wave our leaves of grass as signs of solidarity with Jesus in this world. Tell our children what Jesus means today.

Rev. Dr. Laurence DeWolfe teaches at Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax.

ISTOCK

RENEWAL

The Cultural Divide

Adapting to differences between generations. By Fred Stewart

We live in a country of ever increasing cultures and subcultures. We live at a time when we realize that in the past, many confused winning folks for Jesus with winning folks for our culture. Cultural insensitivity has many times held us back from an effective witness to our faith in Christ.

If we are to renew our ministry and our outreach, I would point to a few cultures existent in Canada that need to be continually studied and understood. It probably will surprise you when I tell you what they are.

First, I would like to share some thoughts I have had over the past few years. My father was 30 years older than me. He would have been 96 this year. We shared much in common. Our tastes in music had a significant overlap with at least 80 per cent of our ›

RENEWAL, continued

preferred artists and songs being in common. We read a lot of the same books. We attended the same church and even sang in the same choir. We were educated in much the same way. In most things and at most times, we shared a common culture.

My children range in age from their late 20s to their early 40s. While we were able to compromise on a road trip playlist that included soundtracks from Les Miz and Phantom as well as Jim Croce, the Beatles, the Eagles and Garth Brooks, I share very little of the music they connect with. They read different books and listen to vastly different cultural voices. Their educations are diverse and do not parallel mine.

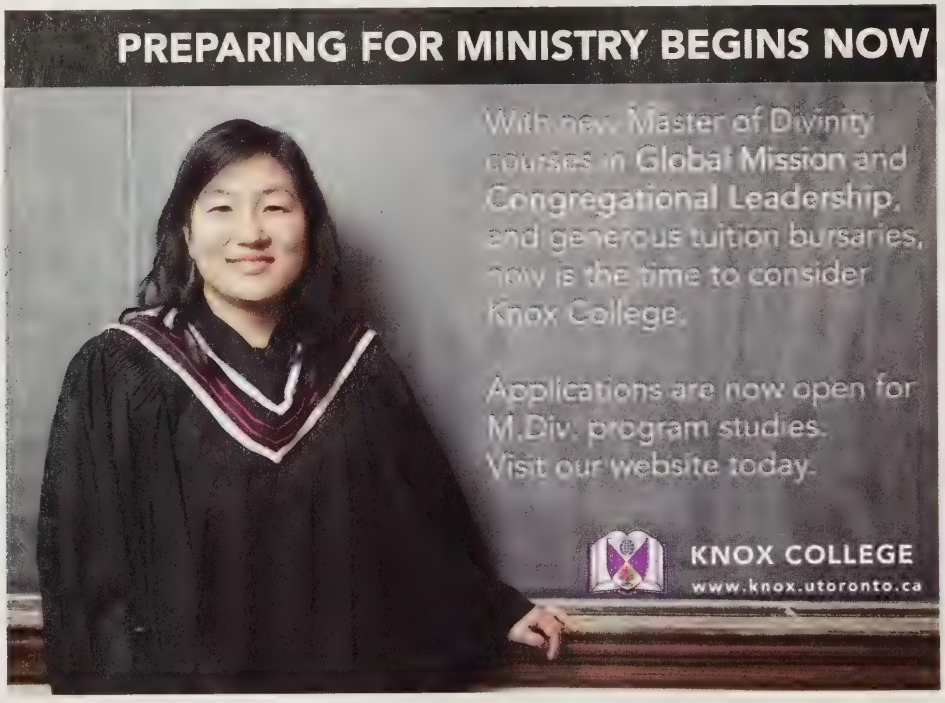
My grandchildren range from newborn to 21. There are more contrasts between them and their parents than my children and me. And both generations share a radically smaller overlap than my dad and I did.

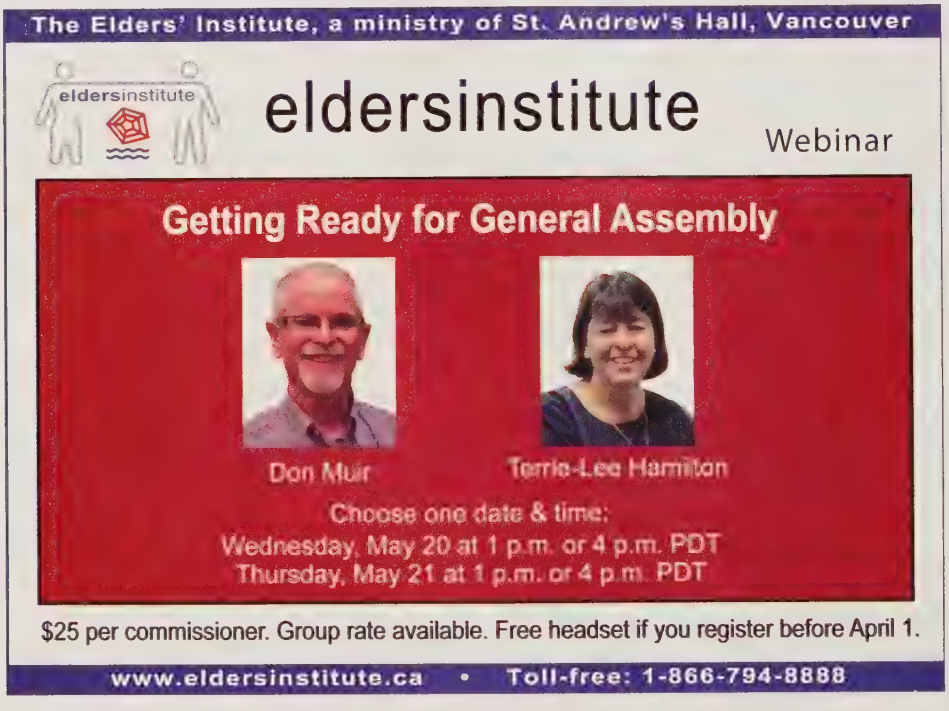
Welcome to significant generational cultural divides. I wonder if we seek the same sensitivity culturally when we seek to reach out to these generations? Are we really looking to make converts to our own cultural Christianity or are we looking to build Christ's Kingdom?

Remember this: Strip mall operators have discovered they can keep teenagers from loitering by playing classical and operatic music day and night. They can actually use a cultural divide in musical preference to drive kids away.

To me that seems pretty far away from the Great Commission. We are called to go into all the world. That includes our own generational cultures. How sensitive are we? How respectful are we? How willing are we to change to reach the next generations for Christ?

Rev. Fred Stewart is executive director of the Renewal Fellowship within the PCC. He is also minister at St. Andrew's, Bolsover, and Woodville Community churches.





ISTOCK

ORDINARY RADICAL

Small but Great

Love makes the simplest things sweeter. By Amy MacLachlan

It's time to get real.

For the last couple of months, I've talked about and tried to change my life of consumption. To be more socially responsible. To share more. Buy less. To be aware of what I do buy.

It's been good, and necessary, and was a suitable place to start on this journey of becoming an ordinary radical. But really, it's barely the tip of the iceberg.

"I'm just not convinced that Jesus is going to say, 'When I was hungry, you gave a cheque to the United Way and they fed me,' or, 'When I was naked, you donated clothes to the Salvation Army and they clothed me,'" writes Shane ›

MARCH'S CHALLENGE

"Small things with great love."

The idea is to let these simple words, originally spoken by Mother Teresa, become your daily mantra. Instead of grand gestures, focus on small things done with kindness, care and compassion. (If you've been following along, this idea was intended for last month's challenge, but yours truly was too focused on purging and donating. Onward and upward!)

Claiborne in *The Irresistible Revolution* (the inspiration for this column). "Jesus is not seeking distant acts of charity. He seeks concrete acts of love: 'you fed me ... you visited me in prison ... you welcomed me into your home ... you clothed me.'"

Ouch.

To help Claiborne remember this call, he has a message posted at his front entryway: "Today, small things with great love ... or don't open the door."

The words are inspired by Mother Teresa, whom Claiborne met and worked alongside for 10 weeks in India. "Mama T" as he calls her, spoke of the little things; how these little things are really all we can do—but that they can make a huge impact when done "with great love."

Do I consciously think of this call every morning? When I'm rushing the kids out to school and daycare, when I'm thinking about all the things I have to do for work and for the rest of my day, do I even consider doing "small things with great love?"

It was a small act, born out of an ability to see the need of a neighbour, and to act to fulfill it. In that one offer of help, she let me know that I was not alone

So how do I shift my focus? To break out of my I'm-too-busy bubble and really think about others and what they might be facing that day?

Step one: Post "Mama T's" words at my front door so I will see them and remember them.

Step two: Figure out how the heck I can practice these "small things" (in preparation for bigger things!) in all I do.

Step three: Focus on and figure out the "love" aspect—these aren't just nice little things to do because it makes us feel good. That misses the point. We are called to act in love; to let our love for our neighbour (and even our enemies) colour and influence and drive all we do.

Does this mean something as simple as putting on a pair of skates and heading onto the ice with my daughter because I can see how desperately she wants me to join her? (I can't skate, by the way.) Does it mean shutting my mouth when the spouse leaves a mess in the kitchen after a hard day, and instead telling him I'll put the kids to bed while he watches TV? Does it mean paying for the coffee of the person behind you in the drive-thru?

Sure.

But I think it should also mean finding ways to reach beyond our comfort zone—to find things that build community; that tell someone you don't necessarily know (or might not even like!), "you're not alone."

When my youngest daughter was just an infant, I was at the grocery store checkout. She was in her car seat, in the grocery cart, screaming as though she were wrapped in sandpaper and hadn't had a meal in days. I tried to pack my rather large order as quickly as I could; all too conscious of the staring eyes around me. And then it happened. A small thing with—what I can only guess was—great love. A woman (not a store employee, I might add) offered to bag my groceries, calmly urging me to pick up my baby instead. Of course, as soon as my babe was in my arms, her screams stopped. And that woman bagged my groceries.

I remember walking out of that store completely in awe of what that woman had done. Was it earth shattering? No. Did it end world hunger? Cause world peace? (Well, it certainly brought peace back to that grocery store!) But no; it was a small act, born out of an ability to see the need of a neighbour, and to act to fulfill it. In that one offer of help, she let me know that I was not alone. That I was part of a community where at least one person cared enough to lend a helping hand.

"We are the body of Christ, not in some figurative sense, but we are the flesh and blood of Jesus alive in the world through the Holy Spirit—God's hands, feet, ears," writes Claiborne.

"Today, small things with great love ... or don't open the door."

Amy MacLachlan is the Record's *managing editor. Follow her weekly blog (and share your thoughts!) at presbyterianrecord.ca.*

Life

Thoughts and inspiration for your daily life

ISTOCK

FAMILY

Did I?

Loving our kids as God loves us.

By Jody Malm

Did I? I wonder, sit on the floor and truly admire my children?

Did I? As a parent, watch them play? Absorbing how their little fingers move, pick up a toy, put food in their mouth, and then hold a sippy cup and drink?

Did I? As I changed them, look at their chubby legs, cute bottom and their tiny toes? Look at how perfectly their legs move and how their belly wiggles when I blow bubbles on their tummy?

Did I? Smile and giggle along with them? Watch them be thrilled with themselves, with the task they are so proud of and clap my hands in praise?

Did I? As I rose their arms over their head, did I rub their soft little back, tickle under their arms? Observe how their body is joined together so magnificently? ›

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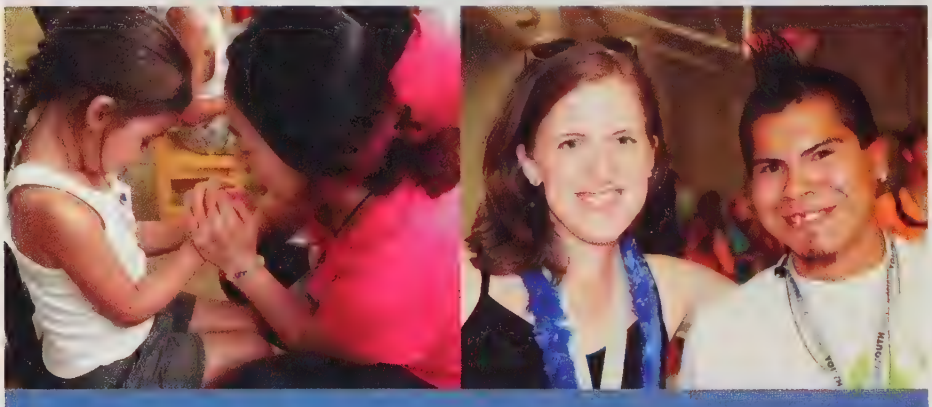

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Did I? Watch their sleep, seeing their breath come and go? Not able to take my eyes off such a peaceful, beautiful, heart warming sight.

Did I? Smell them from head to toe and think there is no smell like that of a baby?

Did I? Look into their trusting, loving, smiling eyes and face, and really see them?

As the years have passed and now I am a grandmother, I wonder, did I?

I hope so. I wasn't the parent who did it all right or the one who did it all wrong. I was probably an "average Jo." Now, as a grandmother, I want to do more, see more, laugh more, love them more. I don't want to wonder, did I? Oh, how I pray that I can be all these things and will take time to do all these things.

Then I think of God, my father. Did He?

As I read my Bible, I find time and time again that He did and still does remember. A large lump wells in my throat. He remembers, from my baby toe to the gray hairs on my head. God was there when I was born, as I grew up, when I became a parent, and now as a grandma. I think I may see and feel as I am reflecting, how God feels about each of us.

He loves us unconditionally, like I love my grandchildren.

"But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness." (Psalm 86:15)

I hope I had these same powerful feelings for my own children, but I wonder, did I?

I am human and I do forget. I thank God that He isn't and that He won't forget.

"Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget. Yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before me." (Isaiah 49:15-16)

Jody Malm lives in the Cariboo region of British Columbia.

ISTOCK

MEDITATION

The Beach in Winter

Clearing out the cobwebs. By Katie Munnik

We spent yesterday afternoon on the beach. A friend had gone away for the weekend and left her car with us, so we were looking for something to do that couldn't be done by public transport. The chilly weather left us stumped. We didn't want a long walk or a hill to climb. We didn't really want to go exploring—just to be somewhere a little out of our ordinary. So we drove to the beach.

It felt like a good sabbathing thing to do.

The beach we chose is by a village where my granny used to live when I was little. ›

MEDITATION, continued

This is the beach I will think about if you say "sandcastle." Somehow, my granny will always be there, spreading out a travelling rug on the sand and helping me drink juice from a carton. There used to be a donkey who lived in a field near the beach, and I remember feeding him chocolate. Of course, it was gone in an instant, but then, slowly and with a very long tongue, he proceeded to lick every reachable surface of his shaggy face in hopes of finding more.

But all those memories are summer, and yesterday wasn't.

The sky was bright, but the wind was strong and cold. From the highway, we could see snow on the hills. We parked the car and layered up with mittens and scarves and hoods pulled up over hats. Tait, my youngest, kept pulling his mittens off again so that he could wave them around and yell, "Mitten!" I tucked his once-again-mittened fingers into the sleeves of his coat and gave him his teddy to hug with his arms. Then we followed a sandy path down through the sand dunes, which hid us from the wind. It was quiet there, though you knew the sea was close. A family walked towards us, a toddler almost asleep against his father's shoulder, a grandfather grinning.

"Certainly blows the cobwebs away," he said as we passed by.

Just what the doctor ordered.

The kids ran on ahead and then I saw them stop as they came out onto the beach and the wind hit them. My daughter, Isla whooped and walked towards the bright waves. Leo, my eldest son threw out his arms to feel the wind, then he settled on a spot by the dunes where he could stomp out the shape of a castle with his rubber boots. Tait spotted the water and followed his sister and I followed, too, as the Spouse started to walk along the shore.

I don't know how long we spent on the beach. Long enough for our faces to feel rough and red with the sharp wind. Long enough to find a few shells and decide that our fingers were too stiff for that kind of collecting

I don't know how long we spent on the beach. Long enough for our faces to feel rough and red with the sharp wind. Long enough to find a few shells and decide that our fingers were too stiff for that kind of collecting. So instead, we watched dogs and their people explore the width of the beach, chasing sticks and balls and surprising crows who flew up into the air and caught the rising wind in their wings. Much higher above us, there were gulls flying, too, catching the afternoon sunlight which made them flash dazzling white against the sky.

Tait hugged his teddy bear with still-mittened hands and watched as three horses walked slowly past. Isla and Leo climbed up the sand dunes and tobogganed down the far side in their duffel coats. They yelled out to me that this was worth the drive. And then climbed up again for another slide.

Later, we walked back through the village as the sky was beginning to turn apricot. On a corner, there was a small cafe with a welcoming fireplace and ridiculously good german cakes. Cold fingers relaxed. Leo played with the camera. The Spouse and I drank coffee. Sunday afternoon.

Another week's now started and I know more cobwebs will collect, but yesterday we felt the wind on our faces and that was enough.

Katie Munnik is an Ottawa writer currently living in Edinburgh, Scotland, with her studying husband and three growing children. Her blog, the Messy Table, can be found at presbyterianrecord.ca.

ISTOCK

VIEWPOINT

Wrestle in Equal Measure

Responding to the LGBT overture. By Kevin Livingston

So much ink and blood has been spilled over the vexing subjects of homosexuality, the Bible and the church that I wonder whether anything useful can be served by returning to these matters again and stirring up pain on all sides. And there is pain! Hurting gay and lesbian Christians and their loved ones wrestling with how to stay in an "uncomfortable" and often condemning church; hurting believers who see their churches moving toward a revisionist interpretation of scripture with regard to appropriate sexual norms and behaviours, and thus diminishing the authority of the Bible; and ordinary folk in our congregations fearing their beloved church will be torn apart by divisive conflict. The rhetoric surrounding this debate has become toxic. Yet it is not going away, and we must wrestle with these matters honestly and graciously, as befits sisters and brothers in Christ.

VIEWPOINT, continued

How should Christians view same-gender partnerships? What does the Bible really teach about sexuality, marriage, and appropriate standards for ordained ministry, and how do these norms square with modern concerns for the full equality and civil rights of gay and lesbian persons? And is it possible for Presbyterians to come to a common mind on these matters?

I am a member of East Toronto presbytery where the "LGBT overture" originated. If approved by General Assembly, it would reverse the Presbyterian Church in Canada's stance on same-sex marriage and its ban on non-celibate gay and lesbian clergy. Our presbytery undertook a two-month process of dialogue. Our conversations were respectful and honest, even though it was clear that we remained deeply divided. At our November meeting, a revised version of the overture was approved and sent to the upcoming assembly.

As a denomination, we are now at a crossroads. Will we endorse same-gender sexual relationships and make the requisite changes to our theology of sexuality, marriage and ordination standards? Or will we welcome gay and lesbian persons into our churches yet maintain the historic norms of chastity in singleness and fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman?

As Presbyterians, we acknowledge there are many sources of authority used to determine what we believe (doctrine) and how we are to live (ethics). Arguments are rightly made from reason, church tradition, scientific evidence, and human experience. But the Bible is our primary rule for faith and life. We read the word of God in scripture through the lens of Christ's teaching and practice and within the cultural settings out of which it emerged (*Living Faith* 5.4), but we are bound to receive it as "the standard of all doctrine by which we must test any word that comes to us from church, world, or inner experience" (*Living Faith* 5.1). To do anything less is to lose our identity as Presbyterian and Reformed Christians.

By my reading of scripture, I am not convinced that this overture reflects the will of Christ. For me, and others like me, the case will need to be made on biblical and hermeneutical grounds. Yet the overture is weak precisely at this point, lacking sufficient biblical and theological reflection to warrant overturning the church's historic position. Arguments arising from changing Canadian cultural values or appeals to generic "justice" or "inclusiveness" are not, in the end, a sufficient basis for changing our doctrine.

I perceive three different scenarios that may play themselves out as we wrestle with these matters.

We can fight. Over the last two decades we have witnessed numerous denominations battling it out in which one side seeks to triumph legislatively or procedurally over the other. While genuine theological debate is normal and healthy, the life and energy of the church is diminished when it remains in a state of perpetual war. Our collective energies go to winning the next round, but Christ's larger mission inevitably suffers.

We can divorce (but probably not amicably). One side or the other could choose to leave the PCC. This is currently happening in the PC(USA), where more than 200 congregations have left the denomination in the past three years over these matters. We could go down this road of division. For the sake of getting on with Christ's mission, it might even be within the permissive will of God. But I am loathe to further fragment the body of Christ, because the unity of the church is just as important as its purity.

We could try to live together while disagreeing. This scenario may be the most challenging of all. At its 2013 Assembly, the Church of Scotland agreed to affirm the church's historic doctrine and practice regarding matters of human sexuality but gave permission to individual ministers and church sessions who wished to depart from the church's stance the freedom to do so without fear of church discipline, appealing to the principle of freedom of conscience in these matters. Providing a "local option" within every congregation and session would mean that as a denomination, we would agree to disagree, and remain together despite our profound differences.

Can the PCC live with two substantially different visions of God's intent for humanity and for what best contributes to human flourishing? Is this approach sustainable in the long term? In this scenario, neither viewpoint "wins." To some, we will be undermining scripture and condoning sin. To others, we would be perpetuating an injustice. But it might provide a witness to the world that the unity we have in Christ outweighs our diversity on this important—but not all-important—subject.

As we seek to wrestle in equal measure with the truth and love of Christ's gospel and its implications for how we can live together in the Body of Christ, I would welcome a season of prayer and honest dialogue together over the next few years to discover a way forward we can all live with. But it will require repentance, humility and courage from each of us.

Rev. Dr. Kevin Livingston is an associate professor at Tyndale Seminary, Toronto.

POEM

Afar Feast

Ethiopia, November 2014

By Stephen Kennedy

After two tiring days of driving, a group of Canadian denominational journalists arrived in the Afar region, one of the most desolate parts of Ethiopia. This region has known droughts and famines for centuries; most famously in 1972 and again in 1985.

The journalists arrived at a base camp just before sunset. In one of the poorest parts of the world, they were treated to a feast.

They picked us each an ear of maize,
peeled back the papery husk with pride,
page by page, twisting and tying
the last two layers into a handle.
They carried them back to base camp,
and laid them out on open coals,
side by side, while we reclined on
pillows under a star-soaked Afar sky.
They served them to us charred, steaming
first fruit offerings of their labour
and we bit into their glory
swallowing their salty toil row by row.
They invited us to dine from
tables laden with dora wot,
shiro, beef tibs, savoury stew,
green beans, potatoes, red lentils, carrots,
onions, fresh-baked bread, injera
spongy soft, teasingly sour
sweet banana, sweet papaya.
We feasted ourselves full, then sealed
the meal with bowls of popcorn
and coffee, velvet smooth boona
brewed from beans fresh roasted, ground fine as dust,
sweetly spiced with cardamom and sugar.
When we had talked the day dry and
surrendered to the silence of
the night, we rose and found our beds.

That's when it happened.

As I lay tented on my cot
I heard a pulsing ember of
women's restrained conversation
flare into laughter. Their bright trills floated
up and out into the darkness,
wiggled through the woven walls
of my room and into my soul,
filling me with wonder,
making me smile
for just being here,
in this corner of the world,
on this holy night.

Rev. Stephen Kennedy is the editor of Testimony, *a monthly publication of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. He also waits tables a few nights a week at Two Dishes Cookshop in Peterborough, Ont.*

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Focus

Stories of mission, ministry and community

PHOTO COURTESY OF RICHARD LETT

MINISTRY

Getting Sober

With a little prayer and a lot of humour.

By Richard Lett

I was scared to go to treatment. It felt like I was sending myself to prison. The counsellor at the shelter said I would someday see my life *before* treatment as the prison. So, on Feb. 6, 2010, I checked into King Haven Treatment Centre for Men. I hadn't told a joke in at least four months. I felt out of my league in this place and decided to keep my past as a comedian on the down low, but anyone who's been knows that rehab is a really bad place to try to keep things on the down low. It is also not a place to quit smoking. Sitting around the smoke tent, I kept pretty quiet as Abby talked about the helicopters he always heard, and war stories of hooker girlfriends and stolen-car crashes.

The first couple weeks of the 10-week program were orientation, or big group. There was Lennie, Nate and Cody. There was Shane, nicknamed Stain. Lorne had been to so many treatment centres we called ›

MINISTRY, continued

him "Lorne again." Jesse, a gigantic football player with fluorescent yellow eyes, and Blackie, who was, as you guessed, very, very white. My roommate I called Smashy, a junkie who saw bed bugs everywhere. Rollie, Dwayne and Rapper Dave filled up the ring of chairs.

Early on we did "The Hot Seat" where everyone would ask each guy a question, going around the circle. When it was my turn, Dwayne went first. He asked, "You said you worked in Fort St. John once. What were you doing there?"

I replied, "I was doing stand-up comedy at one of the bars." After that, every question was about stand-up—who I'd worked with, what it was like.

Finally Jesse, with the yellow eyes, asked, "Did you ever do it loaded?"

I said, "Oh yeah, but I prefer to do it sober, 'cause your timing's better."

The next week I was walking around the grounds with a counsellor, Terrible Ted. He asked how I was doing. I said, "I'm still in denial."

He said, "I can help you with that. You're in rehab!"

I said, "Everyone keeps talking to me about stand-up and I don't want to talk about it because I don't think I can do it anymore, and I keep praying for what I should do and I don't know what to do and it's making me really sad."

Ted said, "Well you did say you prefer to do it sober."

"Ya, well ... But I mean ..."

I did say that. I mean, Ted was taking it out of context, but nothing is ever really out of context...

A couple weeks later I was up late, sitting in the smoke tent. The other guys had accepted that I was a washed up comedian and had moved on. The monitor working the graveyard shift recognized my voice. He said, "Holy cow, is that Richard Lett? They told me there was a comedian here, but they didn't tell me there was a real comedian here." He was a magician and heroin addict (they often are) and apparently we'd worked together. He said, "Every now and then I like to do a show for the boys. Why don't I bring in my kit this Saturday and you can do 15 minutes before me to warm them up?" I begrudgingly agreed and cobbled together the material I could remember.

On that Saturday night, I didn't get high and have a couple shots; I did something different. I did something I heard a guy say he did before he spoke at meetings—I prayed. I prayed that my words be of service to the people who hear them. Standing in the basement TV lounge, under white fluorescent lights, in front of 40 guys sitting on donated couches, I did stand up again. I think the guys were as nervous as I was. At first some giggles, then chuckles, then laughs, then roars. Not born of pain and rage, but joy and freedom. Just for a few minutes, we were lifted up out of that place. And I realized that this wasn't about me, it was about them. After that, these guys would have nothing of the washed up comedian. Dwayne said, "You're gonna get back, and you're gonna be funnier than ever, and you're gonna owe us a lot of money."

My memories of that time are bittersweet because it was like we went to war together. And war has its causalities. We don't know why some people are afflicted with the disease of addiction and some aren't. We don't know why some people find recovery and some don't. Some of the guys who were there that night follow me on Facebook, and are fans, but others didn't make it. Strong, smart, kind young men are gone now. They say every 35 minutes in Canada someone dies from addiction. I saw Dwayne the other night; he came to my show. He was drunk and obnoxious. I told him to get to a meeting. He left mad. I said goodbye as he walked away. Every time a relapsing alcoholic walks away, I say goodbye. Just in case.

Why him, not me? I dunno ...

Richard Glen Lett lives in Toronto. Last month he received his five-year medallion from Alcoholics Anonymous at St. Andrew's, King St., Toronto.

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Convocation Address by

The Right Rev. Mark MacDonald

Ecumenist, Theologian, Church Leader
Anglican Church of Canada: First National Indigenous Bishop

A Pre-Convocation Workshop will be led by
Bishop MacDonald from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

KEGA Grad Luncheon: Wednesday, May 13th
For Knox/Ewart Grads of 2005, 1990, 1975, 1965, 1955 & prior

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PWS&D IS THE DEVELOPMENT AND RELIEF AGENCY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA

ABRIDGED VERSION

PWSDevelopments

The quarterly newsletter for Presbyterian World Service & Development • 2015 Edition, Issue 1

How maternal health programs are making a *big difference*

Husbands are now going with their wives to prenatal visits

SPOTLIGHT ON *Maternal and Child Health*

WHEN YAMIKANI MUMBA went to the local health centre in Malawi with his wife, Zione, he was the only man there, amidst a large group of women. Zione was pregnant and community health promoters had told them how important it was to access medical care before the baby was born.

Though it felt strange to Yamikani to accompany Zione to the clinic—something that just didn't happen in their community—the benefits have been great for their family.

At the health centre Yamikani and Zione, first time parents, learned about healthy family relationships and how to take care of their children. "My child is a gift from God and I want to know how to care for her. Going to the health centre with my wife to learn all of this has made a huge difference. The responsibilities for child care are changing—dads will now take their children to the clinic, it isn't always the mom," he shares.

PHOTOS: PWS&D, PAUL JEFFREY AND CWS-P/A

Becoming a mother and surviving the first year of life can be risky in developing countries like Malawi and Afghanistan, where maternal and child mortality rates are among the highest in the world. Cultural barriers and lack of appropriate medical personnel and facilities have also prevented women from receiving the medical care they need to survive pregnancy and childbirth.

With support from the Government of Canada's Muskoka Initiative, PWS&D has been working to address these issues for the past three years. PWS&D's maternal health program is improving access to health care and helping women and children survive childbirth more often—by encouraging families to lead healthier and stronger lives and make informed decisions that will improve their health and well-being.

Changing cultural beliefs and societal attitudes is having a big impact in Afghanistan as well. ▶

"My child is a gift from God and I want to know how to care for her."

"When I got married, my husband and mother-in-law wouldn't let me go to a clinic for any health-related issues. I got pregnant four times in six years, but kept miscarrying in my early stages of pregnancy," shares Harzat from her home in Afghanistan.

"But when I went to stay with my mother, she brought me to the health centre. After I started taking the medicine they prescribed, my condition improved. Now I have a son and daughter. When my husband found out how I had overcome my pregnancy challenges, he was very happy. Now he immediately takes me to the health centre when I am sick."

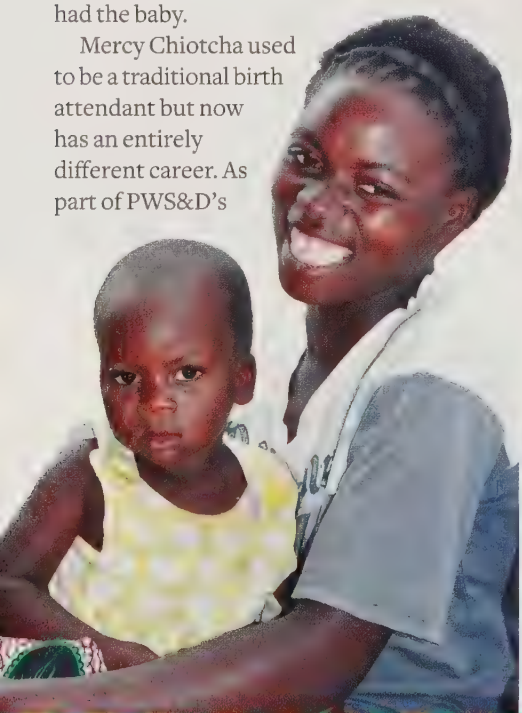
Attitudes have also changed about the kind of medical care women should receive when they are pregnant and after they have had the baby.

Mercy Chiotcha used to be a traditional birth attendant but now has an entirely different career. As part of PWS&D's program in Malawi, Mercy received training in how to play an advisory role to pregnant women. This includes urging women to seek appropriate pre and postnatal care and advising breastfeeding as much as possible.

Twice a month, Mercy now holds learning sessions where she teaches women about safe motherhood issues. She is a volunteer and does this all in order to serve her community.

Mercy now knows why it's essential for women to access the correct medical care, rather than going to a traditional birth attendant. "It's important because the nurses know whether the baby in the womb is fine or not. They have the knowledge, skills and equipment to do that."

These changes in attitudes and the availability and quality of health care services are making a difference in the lives of women and children. Inspired by God's promise of abundant life, PWS&D remains committed to this vital work. ■



Women are learning about family planning through the program

BY THE NUMBERS

While results are still coming in for the project, there is much to celebrate!

- **32** bicycle ambulances have been distributed in Malawi
- **6** delivery rooms have been constructed in Afghanistan
- Over **7,000** men and women have been trained in sexual reproductive health issues
- In the Malawi project area, **94%** of women now have a skilled attendant at birth
- ⬆ Male support and encouragement for the necessity of maternal health services is on the rise
- Over **100** medical staff received training in improved medical service delivery
- Health posts have made over **7,000** referrals to skilled health practitioners

**This program has received generous support from the Government of Canada through Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada (DFATD).*

Canada

Thank You!

Thank you for your amazing support and generosity in 2014. Inspired by God's promise of abundant life, you are providing real sources of hope and opportunity to some of the world's most vulnerable people.

We do this together. Without you, none of this would be possible.

The Birth of the Continuing Church

Looking at 90 years of the new PCC.

By Don MacLeod

A quarter of an hour before midnight on June 9, 1925, in Knox Church, Toronto, the Presbyterian Church in Canada was reconstituted by 79 dissenting commissioners to a General Assembly that had just voted itself out of existence. The majority had chosen to form, with Methodists and Congregationalists, a new United Church of Canada. The 90th anniversary of that traumatic event provides a time to celebrate and reflect. Doomsayers suggest we may not be in a position to celebrate our centenary given the precarious state of mainline churches across North America. But for those of us for whom the so-called ›

ISTOCK

"continuing Presbyterian Church" has been an important and much-loved part of our lives, it is a time to acknowledge our history and be grateful.

Focusing on the event itself rather than looking back (hindsight is always 20/20) we find a complex set of issues as we attempt to recreate what was going on in 1925: business efficiency, post-war longings for strength, theological uncertainties, a rekindling of mission and purpose. The struggle had been long and bitter. In honesty and with some objectivity, neither side came out of the imbroglio with altogether clean hands. In 1925 my father, then a student at Princeton Seminary, was appointed to a mission charge in the Cypress Hills of Saskatchewan. Riding horseback from one schoolhouse to another conducting services, he became an enthusiast for consolidation. On the prairies, Union seemed the only sensible move. The following summer, appointed by the minority mission board to Sussex, N.B., he shared the anguish of a small group who had left Chalmers Presbyterian—now United—Church. With the nearest continuing Presbyterian minister 250 kilometres away, Dad was on his own as he navigated his way around angry tales of ruptured friendships and what was described to him as denominational betrayal.

Not much seemed to have changed 37 years later when on ordination I was assigned a five-point charge in rural Pictou County, N.S. There I found it impossible to avoid conversations, pro and con, about Union, much as I would like to have moved on. On my first night I stayed at the home of a "mixed" marriage, the husband a Presbyterian elder and the wife a die-hard Unionist who often recounted the court case 30 years earlier of her home congregation, St. Luke's, Salt Springs, which was only finally settled by the Privy Council in London nine years later.

None of this could have been anticipated in 1902 when a recent Presbyterian import from Scotland, Principal William Patrick of Manitoba College, Winnipeg, acknowledged as an official Presbyterian representative, addressed the Methodist General Council meeting and commended the union two years earlier in Scotland of a new United Free Church. Thus began 23 years of torturous negotiations. Winnipeg remained a centre of Union aspiration with the minister of St. Stephen's Presbyterian, Charles W. Gordon, its persuasive advocate. (Under the pseudonym of Ralph Connor, Gordon's inspirational fiction had become bestsellers.) Moderator of the 1921 General Assembly, he took an aggressive lead for Union in spite of growing opposition.

Acrimony surrounding Church Union would impact the credibility of the Christian faith in Canada. Before 1925, Presbyterians were the largest Protestant denomination. Their ugly squabbles over Church Union were a very public spectacle. Church Union, instead of advancing the cause of a Christian Dominion of Canada, Gordon's great vision, became yet another factor in the erosion of a Protestant Canadian consensus that was true of an earlier generation. Recent studies by Phyllis Airhart and Kevin Flatt have documented the dramatic change, which accelerated in the 1960s, from the prevalent Protestant and popular religious conservatism of 1925 to today's realities.

There were other implications. After 1925, the

ISTOCK

Presbyterian Church in Canada struggled in an ultimately losing battle to be a national denomination. Church Union had swept the Prairies, divided Ontario, and greatly impacted British Columbia and New Brunswick. After 1925 there was a valiant effort to keep the flag flying across the country so that every population centre could have a Presbyterian congregation. Pioneering clergy and committed laity set a selfless example of sacrificial service in lonely outposts with limited resources. Recovering lost territory became a mantra of the continuing church. The 1929 financial collapse impacted that recovery as financial realities curbed expansion. Two decades later in the high water mark of Canadian institutional Christianity, Presbyterians proved slow to join the surge, latecomers struggling to catch up with a United Church that was visible in every new subdivision.

Then the culture changed and the vision of becoming a truly national church became unattainable. Today, in a savage irony, the trophy-large edifices that Presbyterians were so proud to keep have become a millstone around the neck of declining congregations no longer able to maintain them. In addition, abandoning the ordained missionary year requirement for ordination in 1980 meant that congregations from Whitehorse to Corner Brook, kept alive by a steady infusion of recent ordinands, no longer had a future.

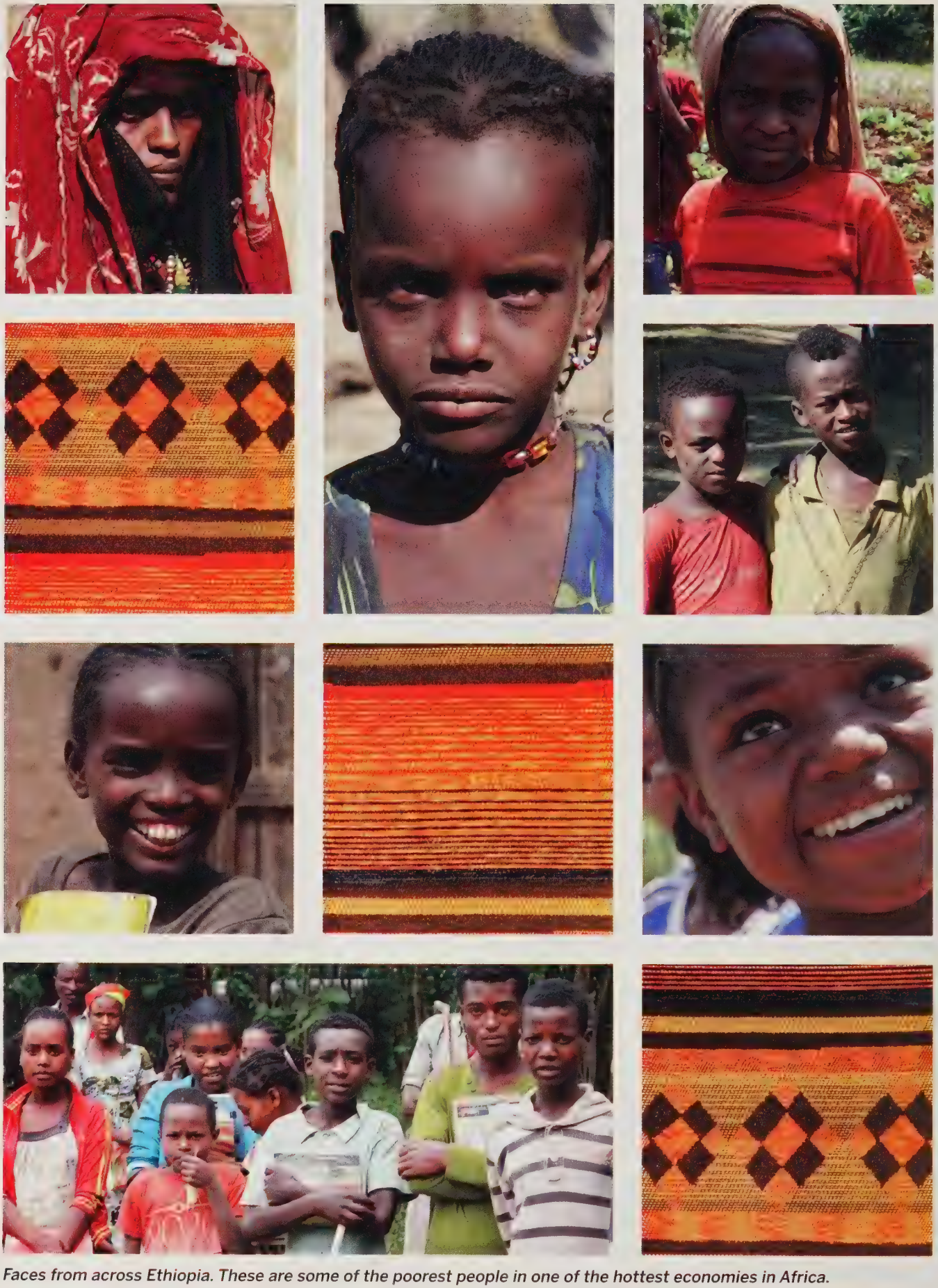
Two decades later in the high water mark of Canadian institutional Christianity, Presbyterians proved slow to join the surge

Who exactly were these who went into Union in 1925? As the late Allan Farris would say, there was more doctrinal cohesion among those entering the United Church who represented the middle ground than the Presbyterian minority which brought together both ends of the theological spectrum. The 1875 union in Canada of the Free Church and the old Kirk had never completely gelled. It was the majority Free Church element in that merger that became dominant and went on to spearhead Union negotiations. Culturally and theologically they represented the piety of Thomas Chalmers, Horatius Bonar and Alexander Whyte, a warm conservatism challenged by the onslaught of so-called higher criticism of the biblical text. In many ways joining Methodists suited them well and caused little dissonance. Generally, other than some Baptists, Protestants in Canada avoided the acrimony in the United States between modernists and fundamentalists. But the need to import clergy (a majority of ministers having entered Union) assured a wide diversity as Presbyterians regrouped after 1925.

Theological education became a battleground for the soul of the new church. Negotiations over the future of both the Montreal and the Toronto colleges became heated. The magnificent 1915 Knox College, ceded to the continuing Presbyterians by the Ontario legislature in 1924, was a place where faculty appointments provided a testing ground for new identities. An effort the year before to make J. Gresham Machen, feisty author of the classic 1923 *Christianity and Liberalism*, the new principal of Knox College had fizzled and instead the name of Thomas Eakin was placed before the 1926 General Assembly. In the debate that followed, A. B. Winchester of Knox Church, Toronto, a self-styled dispensational premillenialist (hardly a classic Reformed position), described Eakin as "an advanced modernist." The appointment went through when Eakin reassured the Assembly that he stood by the Westminster Confession. His subsequent leadership proved otherwise. Likewise Montreal's Presbyterian College under Principal F. Scott MacKenzie was no champion of confessional theology. It was only later with Principal Walter Bryden of Knox College, as John Vissers has pointed out, that the Presbyterian Church in Canada found a neo-orthodox theology that prepared it for 15 years of post-war growth.

As the majority of the 51st General Assembly voted themselves out of existence late on June 9, 1925, the 79 dissident commissioners huddled in a corner of the host College Street church. At the request of Charles Gordon, the organ was being played at full blast as they attempted to read their protest over the Hallelujah Chorus. "In humble dependence on God's grace and the aid of the Holy Spirit," they declared. They sought to maintain the "confession of faith and the standards of this church." They had courage and they had conviction: "*Nec tamen consumebatur*" was their motto. They were anxious that a witness to the Reformed faith not be consumed in Canada. Was it really worth it? Ninety years later in a Canada that has changed beyond all recognition their courage and commitment, and the legacy they left us, should encourage a renewed dedication to their faith and sacrifice.

Rev. Dr. A. Donald MacLeod is research professor of church history at Tyndale Theological Seminary, Toronto.



Faces from across Ethiopia. These are some of the poorest people in one of the hottest economies in Africa.

Green Famine

The space between growth and poverty.

By Andrew Faiz

I first saw **Mogite Moja** across the courtyard. There was controlled chaos as there always is during these visits. We had walked a few hundred metres surrounded by excited children, jumping, laughing along, and through subsistence farms to the village. There was a scurry to accommodate us. Chairs and benches were found and set in a semi-circle, the children calmed and moved to the edges.

I stood under a tree and watched the proceedings take shape. We were the biggest thing to happen to this little village in a long time. One of my fellow travellers was surrounded by a dozen kids; he was taking their pictures and then showing them the image on the back of the digital camera. This thrilled the kids, their responses turning from shock to recognition each time, seeing themselves on a small screen.

I saw Moja about 20 metres to my left. She was standing still; a quiet, strong presence in the midst of animated madness. I took her picture; and again as her eyes shifted slightly to see the camera pointed at her. I had been in Ethiopia less than two days. Looking at her through the lens, the way she absorbed all the information around her, the strangers, the children, with confident grace, I hoped this was the story of Ethiopia I would be telling. Seconds later she joined the fray, helping with the seating arrangements, and getting our meeting started. ›

A COUNTRY KNOWN TO MOST WESTERNERS for civil wars and famines is bursting in every direction. Ethiopia itself seems to be in the midst of a boom, with an economy growing at 10 per cent per annum. Thousands of kilometres of new roads are being paved across the country. A new highway connects the landlocked country to the Indian Ocean via Djibouti. That particular road is busy, crammed with trucks importing and exporting products all day and night.

A new half billion-dollar rail-transit system will open this year in the capital, Addis Ababa. Large swaths of land have been annexed. Ancient alleys and roads stuffed with low-rise homes and businesses razed to build the future. Elsewhere across the city are endless walls of tens of thousands of new condominiums. Various funding schemes—10 per cent down, 90 per cent low rate mortgage; to 40/60 loans—have been introduced. These funding schemes are dependent on having bank accounts and savings.

Nearly three billion dollars of exports leave Ethiopia annually. That number has been rising over the recent years. Coffee is good for almost 30 per cent. A half of all exports are also agriculture related—oily seeds, legumes, bovines, leather.

Still, more than $11 billion is imported; from petroleum to wheat to rubber boots. The imbalance is massive and growth needs to continue to bridge the gap. Lots of growth; new ideas and industries are being introduced regularly. A honey factory is being built in the tourist city of Lalibela. Cut flower farms—hectares of greenhouses—were introduced within the last decade or so and are now almost eight per cent of the country's export, making Ethiopia the fourth largest flower power in the world. Ethiopian roses may well be sitting in a vase in your home right now.

China is the country's primary trade partner, for both imports and exports. China is also a major investor, funding, among other things, the transit system in the capital city and the major roadwork across the country. And they have a piece of the honey factory.

Seen steadily along the import-export highway are the carcasses of crashed trucks, sometimes taking other vehicles and animals with them. Too much speed, too much pressure to grow. Ethiopia, like so many other developing nations, has finally found the formula: Foreign investment and ownership, local labour and international exports—and a government that is willing to accept it.

Welcome to the new Ethiopia.

I AM IN ETHIOPIA AS A GUEST of Canadian Foodgrains Bank, along with four others representing some of the bank's 15 denominational partners. CFGB has been providing relief and development work in Ethiopia for 30 years, starting during the famous famine that was inspiration for international fundraising efforts which included Christmas pop songs and rock concerts.

Recipient at the last General Assembly of the E.H. Johnson award for cutting edge mission, CFGB started as a Mennonite effort in the mid-70s to allow farmers to donate their grains to those without around the world. In 1983, the grain bank was opened to other denominations.

> She is one of the poorest people on the planet; living as she does in one of the poorest countries in the world

Just as the partnership was instituted, Ethiopia hit the front pages of papers around the world for what a BBC reporter famously described as "the closest thing to hell on earth." For many of us, images of that famine are seared into our brains; starving children with distended bellies, the arid landscape. The international response was massive, with millions of dollars of relief flowing to Ethiopia.

CFGB was immediately involved in bringing relief. The stories of those efforts are legion—how grains were gathered in Canada, shipped along the St. Lawrence and across the Atlantic to the African coast where they were bussed across the massive continent to the region in northeastern Ethiopia most affected.

Though Ethiopia was once considered the breadbasket of Africa, it has a long history of droughts and famines. Tens of thousands had died in one in the Afar region in the early '70s. That famine was the downfall of Emperor Haile Selassie, the father of modern Ethiopia who had ruled for four decades. His deemed indifference towards his people during the drought brought on a famine. He was overthrown. His leaving encouraged rebellions and insurgencies along ethnic, cultural and political lines, for the next decade at least.

Just as the rains stopped in the early '80s, the government announced it would be spending half its money on

Top: Members of the Village Flower, a cooperative group.
Bottom: Mohammed, an Afar farmer.

the armed forces fighting various fronts. Lack of resources and support left millions to fend for themselves in a wasteland, leaving hundreds of thousands dead and displacing large populations. A distracted government and deep layers of corruption kept a lot of the international aid that was promised from reaching the intended recipients.

The fact that organizations like Canadian Foodgrains Bank were able to get food into the hands of the suffering are that much more heroic when placed in the context of the different layers of tensions that was Ethiopia in the '80s. The Presbyterian Church in Canada was a partner and had personnel in Africa monitoring the deliveries.

From that hell of three decades ago, through many political machinations and foreign investment, a new modern Ethiopian economy has been growing at 10 per cent per year over the past decade. And it is heading towards meeting all of the Millennium Development Goals; lowering infant mortality rates and general poverty rates across the country.

LITTLE OF THIS IS SOLACE TO MOGITE MOJA. She is one of the poorest people on the planet; living as she does in one of the poorest countries in the world, which Ethiopia still is despite the economic headlines. Our tour is causing a commotion in her village on a November morning because Moja is a member along with a dozen other women of a self-help program that started in 2007. The concept was introduced to them by a local organization, Wolaita Kale Heywot Church Terepeza Development Association, which is supported by World Relief Canada, of the Evangelical Fellowship, which is a CFGB partner. ›

(An aside: If you were to give one dollar to Presbyterian World Service and Development, and that dollar is forwarded to CFGB for international relief or development work, it could be matched $1-$4 dependent on the project, through our federal government's Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development. And, given the intricate web of partnerships our church has through other denominations and their local partners (and they through our local partners), your one dollar can go to almost any remote corner of the planet very quickly with up to quadruple its power. This network of care is one of the most profound systems at work in our world today.)

Moja and the local village women formed a cooperative they call the Village Flower. They made a commitment to meet weekly to save money collectively. At their first meeting each of them brought in half a Birr (Ethiopian currency), or about two Canadian pennies. They added to that sum regularly; each with their tuppence.

They were trained how to hold a meeting. How to make decisions. Their only male member was the secretary/treasurer who could read and write and could keep minutes and the accounts. Along the way the women made small loans to each other. Moja, for example, borrowed money to buy school supplies for her children, so they could get an education. (Schools in the developing world aren't heavily subsidized like ours; children are expected to bring their own supplies. No supplies, no school.) The group is saving to buy a grinding mill—so they can process the maize their husbands grow, and rent the machine to others.

The Village Flower has 6,000 Birr, or about $300, in the bank today. They started with a quarter.

That is a remarkable story: A little training up front, continuous guidance, an incredible amount of commitment and focus by the group, and small, continuous victories. Some women borrowed money to buy seeds, to grow an extra patch of fruits, vegetables, grains, to sell at the weekly market. They pay interest on the loan, and share their profits with the group.

Inspired by the Village Flower, women in a nearby village approached Terepeza to start their own group. And so it grows.

> 'We used to be no better than our animals. We thought of ourselves as animals. Now we are human beings'

But, we weren't in that village in the Sodo district to meet the women's group only. We were there to look at soil. Eighty per cent of Ethiopia's nearly 100 million people live by the land. (Ethiopia is the world's 13th most populous country; and according to the Multidimensional Poverty Index, a way of looking at national wealth that factors more than just economic markers, the world's second poorest.) The earth determines how they live. The sun is steady, rains go through their cycles. The state of the soil is everything.

We travelled 2,000 kilometres around Ethiopia looking at soil. In Sodo, south of Addis Ababa, we witnessed conservation agriculture, which basically means no tilling of the soil. Tilling evaporates the moisture in the ground. Instead of turning the soil and spreading seeds, the farmer covers the farmland in mulch and has to place each seed individually. It is labour intensive. The farmers we met had been experimenting on small portions of their land. They complained about having to dig each seed through the mulch, but boasted of yields sometimes six times what the rest of their land was producing.

In the eastern district of Boricha, we saw a miracle. Years of droughts and political insensitivities and famines had left a whole region stripped of all vegetation. As we approached the project area we passed through vast barren areas. Complete hillsides yellow with parched earth. There was nothing to hold it. Sam Vander Ende, CFGB's man in Ethiopia, said, "The topsoil of Ethiopia was washing out to the Mediterranean Sea."

But in the project area, suddenly vegetation. It was a miracle 10 years in the making. Trenches were cut in the side of the hills to slow the rains, to catch the water. Small bushes were planted. More holes dug. To reverse the erosion you have to hold the water in place. With a little bit of water you can plant trees. They hold more water. It takes time. The soil has to be loved back to life.

As the soil revived, the villagers returned from their desperate wanderings. With them cattle and children, and once-dead, parched acreages became alive again. Life out of a dead thing. A miracle.

Sure, a lot of hard work. Labour intensive for years and

years. Funded through CFGB by the Mennonite Central Committee and managed by an Ethiopian partner. Food and Cash for Work schemes to bring ditch diggers. An $800,000 budget just for last year to affect the lives of over 70,000 people. A hard earned miracle.

We drove for two long days, through the Rift Valley, to the Afar district in the north. Here another miracle too fantastical to imagine.

It starts with Gebreyes Haile, who was the local director for Canadian Lutheran World Relief for many years. In pondering the plight of the pastoralists (nomadic) people in the Afar—who for generations have been following their cattle across vast landscapes which are inhospitable to vegetation—he struck on the idea of redirecting canals from the Aura River to irrigate the land.

Think of the challenge from this simple idea: build small dams along the river, build canals from the river to designated areas which would then become farms, teach pastoralists to farm converting them to agriculturalists.

A dozen years since the project started, Mohammed, one of the beneficiaries, told our group: "Before this we used to move to water and pasture. We ate wild fruits. To eat we had to walk, sometimes it would take two weeks to walk on foot to get food. We had to buy food from the highlanders (where there is more rain). We used to be no better than our animals. We thought of ourselves as animals. Now we are human beings."

SAM VANDER ENDE has been with CFGB in Ethiopia for 22 years, starting as a food aid monitor in southern Africa. He's been here since. His wife, Kathy Marshall has a textile business, which is introducing silk along with the established cotton industry. Their two daughters were born in Ethiopia. He still travels back to Canada regularly but his home and his heart are in his adopted land. (You can see a feature interview with him online.)

He has the passion of a convert. He speaks of Ethiopia with personal pronouns. He introduces me to a phrase I've never heard before, "Green Famine."

"In an abstract sense, the soil is the only thing that we have. That's the medium. What is progressively happening over time is that the medium is being destroyed. Its ability to generate growth, that production that we need to sustain ourselves, is becoming diminished. It's a function of extraordinary growth of the population. In turn, they are stripping the land. They're cutting down the trees,

Mogite Moja, a member of the Village Flower.

cutting down the plant life at a rate that the land can't regenerate itself anymore through natural forces. And so with the passage of time the land is being denuded, eroded because it's a very mountainous place and the production goes down. And we suddenly find ourselves in a green famine. Everything around us is green, yet people are in famine-like conditions."

A host of circumstances, mismanagement, bad luck and indifferent government policies abet the famine, robbing the poor of the soil that nourishes them. The economic booms and the monster horrors keep the focus away from the daily lives of those struggling to save two pennies a week.

It takes vigilance, funding and a few simple ideas—redirect a river, don't till fragile soil, collect pennies, dig holes in a mountain to slow water—to keep the Mogite Mojas and the Mohammeds alive and flourishing. Our denomination has a part through CFGB keeping hope alive and children fed in a little landlocked country.

In the end Moja was the story of Ethiopia I had hoped for, an indomitable presence within a chaotic flurry. Her world is constantly fragile, caught between economic booms and the lush green pastures of the Ethiopian highlands and the constant threat of droughts and famines of the lowlands. She lives there in the thin space between 'Green' and 'Famine' and we are there with her because we can be and because we are compelled to be in the name of the One who walks with us. And with her.

Andrew Faiz is the Record's *senior editor. Find more of his Ethiopia photos on our Flickr page: flickr.com/photos/presbyterianrecord.*

FROM THE MODERATOR

The Patty Test

Would your congregation pass? By Stephen Farris

When my wife Patty accompanies me on a guest preaching engagement, she normally does not actually enter the church building with me. I try to arrive early enough that my hosts don't worry whether I am going to make it and there are usually details about the service that they need to go over. There is no point having her hang around for that. More importantly, when the guest preacher's wife arrives, people feel obligated to be hospitable to her and make a point of welcoming her. That kind of reception doesn't say anything about how the congregation actually receives strangers. So Patty stays in the car reading, and enters a few minutes before worship as an anonymous stranger to the church. We both have an interest in finding out how, or indeed whether, the congregation actually welcomes new people to their church. We call this the Patty Test and we have done it for years.

A distressingly large percentage of the time, no one engages her beyond handing her a worship bulletin or hymnbook. If there is a fellowship time after worship, she quietly goes into the church hall and waits to be approached. She is frequently ignored. This happens even in churches that advertise themselves as "The Friendly Church" or claim, "You're only a stranger here once!" Sometimes church members appear to be approaching her only to walk by with outstretched hand to someone they already know. "Tell me how your daughter is doing!" they say, while totally ignoring Patty. It probably is a friendly church... if they already know you. Patty tells me how the congregation fared on the test during the drive home and in certain cases, if I know the host minister well, I pass on the results.

But help is not only 'somewhere out there.' It doesn't take a program or a new minister to pass the Patty Test

Now, anyone who has met Patty will bear witness that she is herself a friendly, sociable person. There is nothing off-putting or unpleasant about her personality. I am convinced that the problem lies with the congregation more than with Patty. The Patty Test is like a blood pressure test; it is one indicator of the health of the church.

As I cross the country this year, I am constantly being approached by church members who are deeply and rightly concerned about the health of their congregations. They can look around them, add five or 10 years to the average age of their church membership and draw their own conclusions. They are ready, I think and hope, to do what is necessary to help their church regain its vitality. A number of these active Presbyterians will say to me some version of, "Is there any help for a congregation like ours?" Or they ask, "Are there any resources that could help us?"

I hope there are good programs out there and I am very sure that those of us who teach in theological colleges need to concentrate more on forming effective leaders who can help congregations that long for new life. But help is not only "somewhere out there." It doesn't take a program or a new minister to pass the Patty Test. Because in the end, the Patty Test is a small indicator of whether there is love in that church. In the time of persecution in the Roman Empire, it was recorded that unbelievers said of Christians, "See how they love one another." They loved God, loved each other and lived that love in a way that even outsiders could see. And they flourished. It could happen again.

Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris is dean of St. Andrew's Hall at the Vancouver School of Theology.

WESLEY BATES/3INABOX

ST. ANDREW'S, DRESDEN, ONT.
The Super Bowl spirit and the Holy Spirit were both alive and well at St. Andrew's. Here Marilyn Whitson, an ardent fan of the Detroit Lions, holds up a sign as part of a children's story on January 18. Maybe Presbyterians can raise their hands in church after all.

People & Places

Find more online at presbyterianrecord.ca

Photographs can be uploaded at presbyterianrecord.ca.

STRATHCONA PARK, KINGSTON, ONT.
On Sunday, October 5, Strathcona Park celebrated the well-deserved retirement of Rev. Job van Hartingsveldt. The day included a luncheon to celebrate Pastor Job's 14 years of ministry with the congregation, the dedication of a tree, and a gift of travel so he can relax somewhere sunny. Thanks for all your years of service, Pastor Job. Make sure you send a postcard.

PATERSON MEMORIAL, SARNIA, ONT.
You may notice a family resemblance in this picture. Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris, Moderator of the 2014 General Assembly, was a guest preacher at Paterson Memorial on December 7, displacing the usual minister, Rev. Allan Farris, his son. You know what they say about the apple not falling far from the tree.

THE OTHER SIX DAYS

Bald Eagles, Bald Ministers and Goldfish

Wacky and wonderful wanderings. By Bradley Childs

TERRIBLE IDEA

So... I don't know how or why I missed this one because it's right up my alley, but apparently at the start of the 2013 academic year, a conservative Christian university in Tulsa, Oklahoma, had a terrible idea. Oral Roberts University, home of the Golden Eagle mascot, gathered its 4,000-some students together into their beautiful glass arch-topped chapel and released a live bald eagle into the sanctuary. It soared around the balcony to thunderous applause and chants of "U.S.A.! U.S.A.!" It was very "Christian" (???). However, it was also short lived. As you can probably imagine, it didn't quite go as planned. Rest assured, Lewis (that's the eagle's name) is fine but the whole thing was caught on tape.

FIND IT @ **youtube.com. Search "Oral Roberts bald eagle."**

MESSAGE FROM GOD?

Being an American, I will admit that the fine state of Florida has a particular reputation stateside. It is extremely segmented, so what you get is a huge mix of social-political-religious views clashing together. It also has some of the most beautiful landscapes you will ever find. But it also produces some very unique individuals. Patti Burke is one of them. A nice, sweet lady of faith, Patti found a message one day while eating her favourite snack, those cheesy and wonderful little goldfish crackers. Patti is convinced that God put a message in her salty treat because she saw both a cross and a crown of thorns imprinted in its tiny "flesh." When asked about the "miracle," Patti's own pastor reportedly responded (I believe) quite well saying, "I would hesitate to call it a miracle, but I think it points to the miracle, which is Jesus Christ." Not bad. Not bad at all.

FIND IT @ **news.yahoo.com. Search for "God in goldfish cracker."**

BluefishTV

VIDEO

Bluefish TV has great clips and video sermon illustrations. This week I accidentally stumbled upon a little gem titled, "What if Darth Vader Joined Your Small Group?" It's genius. At least my inner nerd thought so.

FIND IT @ **youtube.com. Search "What if Darth Vader Joined Your Small Group?"**

CHARITY

It's been just short of two years now. I've been growing my hair out from a buzz cut and it's currently about 12 inches long. Once I have a ponytail that reaches that length it will be gone and I'll be bald. I have mixed feelings about it now, but when my head gets shaved someone else gets to feel good again. Wigs for Kids has been providing hair replacement systems and a lot of other support for children all around the world who have lost their hair due to fire or chemotherapy or radiation. And they do it for free with the help of partners like Pantene Pro-V and people like my daughter Madeline. If you've got it, or you can grow it, do it. There's a million reasons why and few not to. And as a side note: I've saved about $700 on haircuts.

FIND IT @ **wigsforkids.org.**

Rev. Bradley Childs is minister at First, Regina.

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Synod of the Atlantic Provinces

Tabusintac, N.B., St. John's; New Jersey, Zion; and Bartibog, St. Matthew's; Full-time three-point charge; Interim Moderator Rev. Derek Krunys, 206 Wellington St., Miramichi, NB E1N 1M7; dkrunys@hotmail.com.

Synod of Quebec and Eastern Ontario

No vacancies at this time.

Synod of Central, Northeastern Ontario and Bermuda

Alma, St. Andrew's and Elora, Knox: Full-time minister for a two-point charge; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Linda J. Bell; 5237 3rd Line, Rockwood, ON N0B 2K0; 519-856-9155; drbell@hsfx.ca.

Amherst Island, St. Paul's: Half-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Karen Bach; 613-353-1033; karen.bach@utoronto.ca; stpaulsamherstisland.com.

Brampton, North Bramalea; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Geoff Ross; 905-451-1723; geoff@standrewsbrampton.ca.

Erin, Burns and Ospringe, Knox; Two-point charge, full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Harvey Self, PO Box 276, Orangeville, ON L9W 2Z7; 519-941-1334; office@tweedsmuirpresbyterian.org.

Mississauga, Erindale; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Kristine O'Brien, c/o Trafalgar Church, 354 Upper Middle Rd. E., Oakville, ON L6H 7H4; 905-842-2800; trafalgarchurch@bellnet.ca.

Toronto, Glenview; Full-time senior minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Robert Faris; c/o St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, 73 Simcoe St., Toronto, ON M5J 1W9; 416-593-5600 ext. 229; b.faris@standrewstoronto.org.

Uxbridge, St. Andrew's-Chalmers: Full-time minister; Interim Moderators Rev. Hugh Donnelly and Rev. Dr. Lynda Reid; 814-25 Cumberland Lane, Ajax, ON L1S 7K1; jlreid@bell.net.

Synod of Southwestern Ontario

Bayfield, Knox; Part-time; Interim Moderator Rev. John Henderson, PO Box 824, Exeter, ON N0M 1S6; 519-235-2608; henderson.johncharles@gmail.com.

Hamilton, Central; Minister full-time; Interim Moderator Rev. Curtis Bablitz, 2138 Brant St., Burlington, ON L7P 3W5; 905-335-2640; minister@branthills.org.

Hamilton, MacNab Street: Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Bob Geddes; 905-389-3001; bobgeddes@rogers.com.

Hamilton, St. Cuthbert's: Part-time stated supply; Interim Moderator Rev. Carol Wood; 905-525-9140 extension 24127; woodrink@gmail.com.

Hanover, St. Andrew's; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Alex McCombie, c/o St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 20004, Hanover, ON N4N 3T1; 519-363-5392; standrews@wightman.ca.

Ingersoll, St. Paul's; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Mark McLennan, 59 Riddell St., Woodstock, ON N4S 6M2; 519-537-2962; roundrev@rogers.com.

Mooretown, St. Andrew's and Moore, Knox; Full-time ministry in a rural two-point charge; Interim Moderator Rev. Shirley F. Murdock; 914-1275 Sandy Lane, Sarnia, ON N7V 4H5; 519-491-9892; sfm.rev@gmail.com.

Walkerton, Knox; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Owen Kim, 19 Brownlee St. S., PO Box 526, Teeswater, ON N0G 2S0; 519-392-6955; maplemission@gmail.com.

Synod of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario

Winnipeg, Man., Kildonan Community; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Matthew Brough; 204-803-7743; matt@prairiechurch.ca.

Synod of Saskatchewan

Weyburn, Knox; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Bob Wilson; 2242 Goff Place, Regina, SK S4V 2T7; 306-525-3889; wilsonret@sasktel.net.

Synod of Alberta and the Northwest

No vacancies at this time.

Synod of British Columbia

Burnaby, Burnaby Taiwanese; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Glen Davis; gjidavis@telus.net.

Cranbrook, Knox; Senior pastor; Co-Interim

Moderator Rev. Doug Johns, 117 Norton Ave., Kimberley, BC V1A 1X8; 250-432-9531; revdjohns@hotmail.com.

Richmond, Richmond Presbyterian; Interim Moderator Rev. Bruce Dayton, 705-5050 Halifax St., Burnaby, BC V5B 2N5; 604-277-5410; dbd99dbd@gmail.com; for full details on the position, application and our church/congregation/community, please visit the congregational profile link atrichpres.com/wp/rpc-congregational-profile.

Victoria, St. Andrew's; Full-time senior minister; Interim Moderator Dr. Laura Kavanagh; 250-415-8173; ltkknox@telus.net.

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2015: The Year of the Gift Annuity

The 2014 General Assembly passed the following recommendation:

> *That every congregation be encouraged to invite their members and adherents who are sixty years of age and older to consider acquiring a gift annuity, thereby providing guaranteed tax-free annual income for the rest of their lives and a significant legacy for the future of the church.*

Joanne Instance, who served as President of the Women's Missionary Society from 2001–04, is a great example of the benefits of gift annuities for both the donor and the church.

On May 23, 2014, Joanne passed away in Winnipeg just days after attending the 100th Anniversary Celebration for the WMS and the National Women's Gathering with her daughter Carole. (Both pictured above, along with granddaughter Kella.)

In 2006, Joanne acquired a $15,000 gift annuity through the PCC, naming *Presbyterians Sharing*, PWS&D and the WMS as beneficiaries. In exchange for her gift, she received:

- a one-time tax receipt of $3,346
- guaranteed annual payments of $903.90 (84% tax-free) for a total of $6,607 during her lifetime
- plus, she left a legacy of $12,334 for the church after she passed away.

Through her foresight and generosity, Joanne continues to give to the church she loved. To learn how you can become part of the future while earning tax-free income today, contact Sheryl Sutton in the Planned Giving Office.

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The above example is for illustrative purposes only. Gift annuity rates are subject to change.

obituaries

Barron, George Dennis (B.A. M.Ed.), surrounded by his family at the Toronto General Hospital on Thursday, November 27, 2014 in his 75th year. George Barron of Pembroke, Ont., born on December 25, 1939 in Toronto, beloved husband of Emma Winsor Barron (née Elton), member of the Order of the Diaconate. Loving father of David (Wendy) and Peter (Jennifer) Barron. Caring grandfather of Hailey, Seth, Aidan, Lexie, Artemise and Abraham. George was active in the church for many years in Toronto, Ottawa and Pembroke, including long service with the Boy's Brigade of Canada.

Norwood, Thomas, passed away in Hamilton, Ont., on January 10 at the age of 87. He lived a life of service. This ministry of service touched a broad spectrum of people within and outside of the Presbyterian community. As a youth, Tom became involved in the Boy's Brigade and continued this association for over 40 years as a group leader, national treasurer and Canadian president. For this dedication he was awarded a Governor General's citation in 1969 and the Queen's Jubilee Medal in 1977. Tom served as a church elder in six congregations, at General Assembly, Presbyterian Men and two terms on the Board of Congregational Life. For more than 40 years he was a board member of the Woodland Beach Community Church serving at different times as secretary, treasurer and chairman.

Tom's wife, Kay passed away less than four weeks after her husband on February 5. They will be greatly missed by children Susan (Archie Chase), Peter (Sue Middleton) and Stephen (Joanne Brennan); grandchildren Alison and Scott Chase, Graeme and Malcolm Norwood and Daniel and Kaylee Norwood.

FOR THE JOURNEY

The Lesson of Candle Ice

God is merciful. By David Webber

Walking on ice has always freaked me out just a little. Every year at freeze-up in November I look out at the new ice on Lac La Hache and feel torn between the temptation to venture out on it and the terror of what could happen if I did. The temptation is the absolute wonder of walking or skating on a sheet of clear glass that allows a perfect view of what lies below one's feet in the lake. It's like another world. The terror is what it would be like to break through that ice. But there is little deception in new ice at freeze-up; everyone knows it's dangerous.

It's March now, spring ice time. The ice is usually at least a couple of feet thick on Lac La Hache in March, even though the spring thaw has begun. Surely it must be safe if it's that thick. Well, maybe; except for candle ice.

Thick spring ice can be very deceptive. If you like to watch an ice cube melt in a glass of single malt scotch—and I don't because I am an impatient purist—the ice cube just gets smaller and smaller. On a lake, the melting of ice is way more complex than that. It's more complex because the melting of lake ice involves a series of partial thaws and then refreezing as daytime temperatures follow nighttime temperatures or as spring weather patterns change. This freeze-thaw cycle can produce a honeycomb of water and long hexagonal candle-like crystals of ice. This is called candle ice, a form of rotten ice that develops in columns perpendicular to the surface of the lake. They are extremely hard to see because they are usually under the snow. Even though the ice may be a foot or two thick over all, step on one of these candle ice columns and you are through the ice in an instant, snowshoes and all. When I was working as an assistant ranger for the B.C. Forest Service in my younger years, venturing across a frozen lake on snowshoes in the spring was often required as part of my work. But it was always fraught with concern.

Then and now, I can't help imagining the terror of accidentally stepping on a candle ice column to plunge through the ice. I can't help imagining coming up against the ice, my face pushed against the underside; helpless and hopeless; powerless and perishing, drowning and dying. And as I imagine this, being locked in the "ice water mansion" of some wilderness lake, I can also imagine a huge mighty fist of steel smashing through the ice and grabbing me by the hair and dragging me out of the water to save my life. And in my imagination, I think I have just conjured up something akin to what the New Testament calls the mercy of God.

Mercy is spoken of over and over in both testaments of the Bible as a characteristic of God. I have often wondered what is meant by it. To me, to say "God is merciful" is to say something almost technical, certainly theological. It's not really that helpful for me. My mind tends to work more in pictures and experiences rather than in theories and ideas. But the picture of being helplessly trapped under the ice, unable to do anything for myself and then having some tremendous force take a mighty action to save my life by ›

ILLUSTRATION: BARRY FALLS

smashing through the ice and plucking me to safety; that is pictorial and experiential for me. That is mercy I can understand.

Just for fun I decided to look up the word mercy in my New Testament. There are lots of places to look. The place that immediately came to my mind was the well-known passage in Ephesians where Paul writes: "But God is so rich in mercy, and He loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, He gave us life when He raised Christ from the dead" (Ephesians 2:4–5).

When I looked up the biblical Greek word for mercy that Paul used in the original, it was the word *eleos*. When I looked up that word in my Greek dictionary what I found were descriptions of the powerful helping the powerless, of the mighty rescuing the perishing, of the benevolent having compassion on the helpless, of the wealthy forgiving the debt of the hopelessly indebted. The words powerless, perishing, helpless and hopeless spoke to me, conjured up pictures for me. The pictures were oddly very similar to the "ice water mansion" picture of mercy that was on my mind as I looked out on the deceptive, rotting spring ice of Lac La Hache. And all of those pictures somehow bring me to the picture of Jesus on the cross.

"When I survey the wondrous cross," wrote Isaac Watts in 1707. What did Watts see? He said he saw "love so amazing, so divine." When I survey the wondrous cross I get a picture of mercy—mercy of the kind that smashes through the ice to rescue the helpless and hopeless and powerless and perishing. Rescues the likes of me. "Even though I am dead because of sin," the Apostle tells me, even though I am as good as buried because of sin—sin in general, my own sin in particular—God is rich in mercy.

Sin seems so deceptive. It always seems to take me unawares. It's like falling through the ice. That's part of the tragedy of sin. But the horror of it is that it traps me, it sucks the life out of me daily and eternally. The horror of it is that it seems impossible for me to break through, to break out of its grasp. Being entombed by sin is like being trapped under the ice; I am helpless and hopeless and powerless to break its cold, hard grasp on me. I am dying because of it, gasping for life because of it, perishing because of it. And I can't break out of its icy death-hold on me.

I am beginning to learn that is exactly why Paul calls God 'rich in mercy.' When I can't break through sin, when I can't break its hold on me, when I am struggling for life but dying because of it, there is Christ on the cross, the mighty iron fist of God breaking sin's icy grasp. There is Christ, risen from the grave, the first fruits of the resurrection, the proof that I can trust Him to rescue the perishing, save the dying, give new life to the dead. *Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison.*

Rev. David Webber is a minister of the Cariboo, B.C., house church ministry and the author of four books. His latest is When the Aspen Flowers.

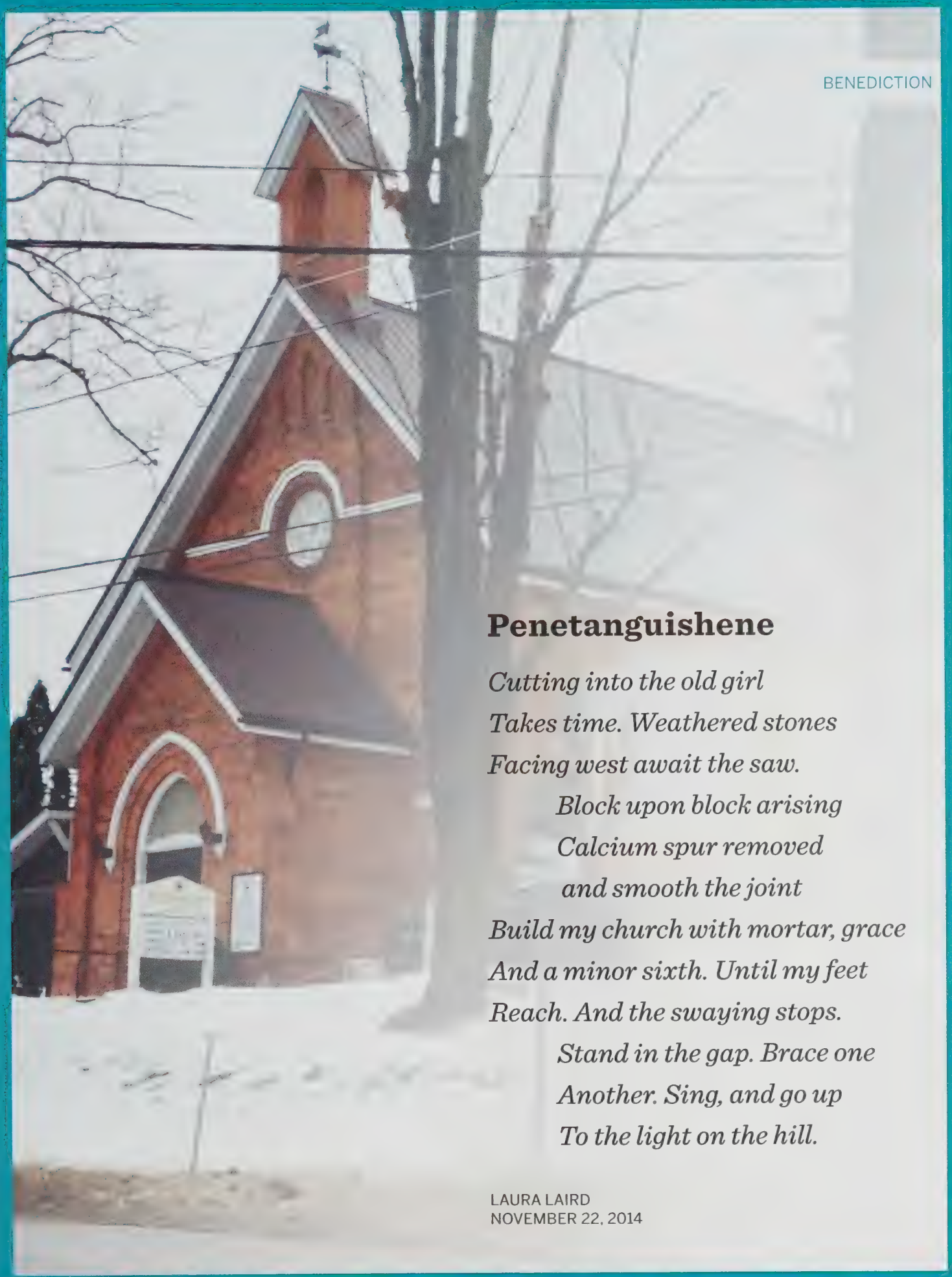

PHOTO BY LAURA LAIRD

Penetanguishene

Cutting into the old girl
Takes time. Weathered stones
Facing west await the saw.
Block upon block arising
Calcium spur removed
and smooth the joint
Build my church with mortar, grace
And a minor sixth. Until my feet
Reach. And the swaying stops.
Stand in the gap. Brace one
Another. Sing, and go up
To the light on the hill.

LAURA LAIRD
NOVEMBER 22, 2014

Many of us are familiar with the winter season, but it may not be just in the garden. There are times for all of us when the landscape becomes bleak and the winds bitter. Seasons change and the beauty we knew has gone.

Often, when our own personal landscape becomes barren we respond as I have to my winter garden. We close the drapes, light a candle and desperately try to shut out the trouble. If I can just close my eyes tight enough, we think, it will go away.

But ... while it may be true that colours change and plants become dormant ... there is still scent and texture and movement to enjoy. There is life out there, and beauty, if only I would put on my mittens and go out to explore it.

—KRISTINE O'BRIEN, THE BLOOMING REVEREND

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Searching for hope in the quest to address climate change.

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What to preach on Good Friday and local artists paint the Easter story.

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"When I get honest, I admit I am a bundle of paradoxes. I believe and I doubt, I hope and get discouraged, I love and I hate, I feel bad about feeling good, I feel guilty about not feeling guilty. I am trusting and suspicious. I am honest and I still play games. Aristotle said I am a rational animal; I say I am an angel with an incredible capacity for beer.

"To live by grace means to acknowledge my whole life story, the light side and the dark. In admitting my shadow side I learn who I am and what God's grace means."

—BRENNAN MANNING

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Loving the Earth
People of faith are at the forefront in the quest to address climate change, but we've still got a long way to go.

Cover illustration: Thinkstock

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FOR THE RECORD

Overcoming Fear and Loathing

Vanier points the way to deal with fear of ISIS to the collapse of the church. By David Harris

It would be convenient to blame a hard winter for the state of the national psyche, but that would avoid addressing the real roots of fear and anxiety.

And just as we are coping in society with politicians linking everything but the decline of the dollar to "jihadi terrorism," there is dissonant vibration running through parts of the church, induced by fear that this summer's General Assembly will make a bad decision in regards to various overtures concerned with same-sex issues.

Fear is an emotion rooted in difference. It is a remnant of our ability to survive: people who look like us must be part of our tribe and therefore are friends. People who are different are from a different tribe—and likely foes.

Fear is not overcome with anger, bravado or any kind of negative reaction. That only fuels the situation. Fear is only overcome with love—a message that Jesus ceaselessly preached, but which even his would-be followers have had a difficult time accepting.

Perhaps it's just what makes the news, but I hear God's alleged wrath invoked more than God's love. And even then, God's love is parried—sometimes even in letters to the editor—with divine judgment or its dispensation is so restricted that it seems nothing like the love that is the epitome of the divine names in scripture (see John's gospel and letters).

So it was welcome news indeed to learn that Jean Vanier is the recipient of this year's Templeton Prize. Vanier, son of former governor general Georges and his wife, Pauline, certainly ought to be known by every Canadian.

Fear is not overcome with anger, bravado or any kind of negative reaction. That only fuels the situation

Originally a philosopher, who taught at St. Michael's College for a while, the deeply religious Vanier sought to do something more spiritual with his life. In 1964, he was introduced to two men institutionalized with developmental disabilities and subsequently invited them to come live with him in northern France.

Out of that meeting L'Arche was formed. Today, there are 147 communities in 35 countries, including many in Canada. I visited the one just a few kilometres from my home a few years ago and met the man.

One could simply assert that Jean Vanier is a saint. To be in his presence is astonishing. You instinctively know that his mind has enough intellectual wattage to power a small town. Yet a more humble man I have not met.

In an interview with *The Globe and Mail* on being awarded the Templeton, Vanier acknowledged the prevalent fear factor: "We are in a world that is rather terrifying. ... There is great insecurity."

The societal result is defensive tribalism. "People close ranks and hide behind their factions." And, at the personal level, he said: "The problem is that most people disappear behind their titles or their shortcomings.

"At L'Arche, you are who you are and you reveal yourself as you are."

Such words ought to embarrass politicians who stoke populist fears. And it should cause all of us who think God may have lost control of the church and the world to recall Simon Peter's experience in the Garden of Gethsemane and put away our verbal swords.

Jean Vanier has helped transform the world by changing our perceptions of people with extraordinary challenges. Emulating his example in our lives can transform us and those around us.

David Harris is the Record's *publisher and editor.*

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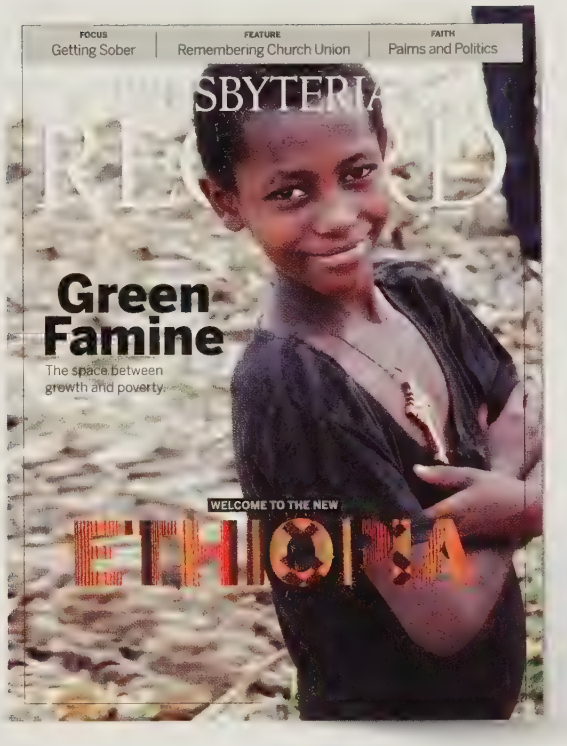

Caught in a System

Re Numbed and Helpless, February

I'd like to update you on the situation of John Calvin, mentioned in the February Pop Christianity article. John is a young gay man in Edmonton who is being deported to Palestine for family connections to Hamas. In Palestine, he faces a death sentence for apostasy, having converted to Christianity. John has appealed his deportation and has submitted a Pre-removal Risk Assessment. At this point, there is not much more he can do but to wait and try to keep his spirits up. In response to his story, 12 different faith groups in Edmonton—including Pentecostal, Muslim, Presbyterian and Mennonite—came together to pray for John and to raise awareness of LGBT refugees in Canada. Sadly, there are many people like John caught in a system that leaves little room for forgiveness and compassion.

MARK CHIANG , EDMONTON

Some years ago the pastoral counselling people in Montreal ran a workshop on dealing with conflict in which they identified a range of approaches to disputes. At one end there are those who want to rush in and fix it right away; at the other end are people who want to walk away and think about it. I am definitely in the second category. Perhaps Andrew Faiz is closer to the first and his frustration comes from not being able to do anything. My approach avoids frustration, but it is a monumental cop-out. Once I have understood a problem, I don't have to do anything about it. I don't pretend to have understood the problems Faiz raises but I can suggest what may be useful questions.

We have disposed of the Victorian certainties but put nothing in their place. Like Eve we have been seduced by the allure of reason (Genesis 3:6). Reason is a useful tool but it is not the be all and end all of wisdom. ›

Letters

Because we don't agree on wisdom we are adrift on an ocean of uncertainty. People who can't handle being adrift sometimes trust to their own thinking for security, whether it be the pathological misogyny of the pig farmer in B.C., or a slavish devotion to bureaucratic stipulations as in the case that has ensnared John Calvin.

Idolatry is not dead, not by a long shot.

GEOFF JOHNSTON, ONLINE COMMENT

There seems to be a common misperception that the assault in Paris that resulted in 12 deaths was an attack on free speech. When, actually, it was the attackers' response to having their culture insulted. Insults do not justify killing, but disagreeing with another culture is one thing, insulting their beliefs quite another.

People in Islamic countries are born, raised, socialized and are products of their culture, as we are of ours. In our society freedom of speech is a right, inherent and legislated, but with every right comes responsibility.

GEORGE TUCKER, THUNDER BAY, ONT.

Take Another Look

Re Supreme Court Says Yes to Assisted Dying, March

I read this article with the hope of hearing that we will, as a church, revisit this issue (seeing as how it's been almost 20 years). Unfortunately, the statement by Stephen Allen regarding the submission of a brief which "could state the PCC's opposition to doctor assisted suicide ..." has left me feeling that there will be no room for debate. The Anglican Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church appear to be open-minded about engaging in conversation. I would hope and pray that the PCC can be receptive to the idea of having another look at this.

JENN FLEMKE, STITTSVILLE, ONT.

Deeply Concerned

Re Wrestle in Equal Measure, March

This article is clearly the product of spiritual sweat and is a thorough summary of a dilemma. Time, prayer and conversation are all beneficial. Time often blunts once rigid viewpoints, prayer can change the one who prays and serious conversation can nurture empathy and allow charity to bloom. My hope is that individual passion would be channeled within the Presbyterian Church as a corporate body to focus on what is truly important, like satisfying the Great Commission.

GLEN A TESKEY, ONLINE COMMENT

Old Friends

At the age of 83, I still enjoy reading the print version of the *Record*. Some of the contributors feel like old friends.

AUDREY HILL, VIA EMAIL

The Ekklesia

Re Cultural Divide, March

I really appreciate what you're saying, Fred. I might add that we need to be sensitive to the vast cultural differences that can exist within a generation—particularly within multicultural settings or across geographical space. One of the challenges is how to create space for authentic voice, so as not to take on a marketing approach to ministry, while preserving a sense of being a collective, the *ekklesia*. I'm sure this is accomplished in part by working towards leadership teams that have intentional

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diversity while having a high commitment to being a team.

JENN BURNETT, ONLINE COMMENT

Definition Problems

Re Sovereign Grace, March

Good definitions are essential to clarity of understanding and discussion. Many of the words regularly used in church have become muddied or muddled so that they have become little more than the sound of religious jargon. They may be used as words of general comfort rather than definition. If words have become the sound of a tune, it is nearly impossible to return them to clarity of definition.

Given this situation, it is perhaps better to attempt to describe what we want to say in other words. Alternative descriptions would aid clarity and impose no barriers to those not familiar with church words. God lies beyond human definition. Without God being, nothing including our own experience would exist.

Even the word "Christian" has definition problems. A Christian is a member of the body of Christ or a church; or a disciple that follows the example of Jesus. We should look to Jesus to know the nature of God.

However our image or understanding of Jesus is often a bit laundered. We have made Jesus more comforting and less challenging, often with the help of church words. Jesus adulation is a regular feature of Sunday worship. This is usually delivered as a sandwich without the crust. The crust is that a Christian is constrained to follow the example of Jesus. This cannot be done without taking up the cross or taking courses of action that will have some considerable expense to the self.

ANDREW MITCHELL, ONLINE COMMENT

An Exciting Chance

Re Print Is Dead, February

One magazine may be passed on to two or three other people, but the reach of an article online or a viral video can be astronomical depending on the relevance and where the article is originally posted. I think it's exciting that there are so many ways to interact and engage with information, and that the word of Christ can be shared not just with members of the church who are already subscribing to the *Record*, but with those who may have no experience with faith coming into contact with His word through a friend over social media.

This really is an exciting chance to tell more people of His love.

CHRISTIN, ONLINE COMMENT

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POP CHRISTIANITY

Bending the Wild

Grab that morning Joe. By Andrew Faiz

Mornings start with uppers—"I'm no good before my first cup of coffee!" And continue during the day—java, tea, cola, energy drinks. You need to mediate the crash each time an upper wears out; it's done with more uppers. Later in the evening, it's on to the downers—"What a day, I need a drink!" A beer after work, a glass of wine with dinner, a scotch after, so on. You're too wired/tired to sleep. Bedtime nears midnight or later; the alarm goes off at six. Back to the uppers.

We need the uppers to survive work, where we spend the majority of our time, because work defines us, and pays us money so we can have "quality" time with those we claim to love most of all.

Coffee is the second largest traded commodity internationally—some qualify that as second largest legally traded commodity to note that drugs like cocaine, heroin and marijuana are also major businesses. And they along with coffee and oil are at the root of many injustices, wars, pure greed and mean-spiritedness. But, we need our uppers. And our downers.

And our techs, apparently. Forget the slave camps, the human rights violations; get me my iTechs; let us worship the iGod. If only we could bring our iPads and coffee to church—my, my, wouldn't that be perfect? We could, of course, sit in our idling cars with our coffee and iTech at the drive-in church. What would that church possibly worship with all those idols at hand?

You can't flip through a magazine, other than this one, or watch TV or listen to the radio, without some reminder that nature is the natural enemy

Addictions. So many addictions. The greatest of which is social norm: To be accepted.

Social polity dictates we must shampoo every day to maintain a natural look. This dries out the hair, so you add a conditioner. Take away the natural oils, add the fake oils. Same with skin: soap soap soap and then moisturize moisturize moisturize. Same with teeth—for the fear of having a medieval mouth, wear away the enamel and replace it with synthetic enamel. There is a subtle art to vanities and most of us have mastered its many shadings. How to fake being natural, which is a fake standard of natural because the real natural is rough and stinky. Perfumes were invented not to add a flavour but to cover an odour. The natural odour that is our body.

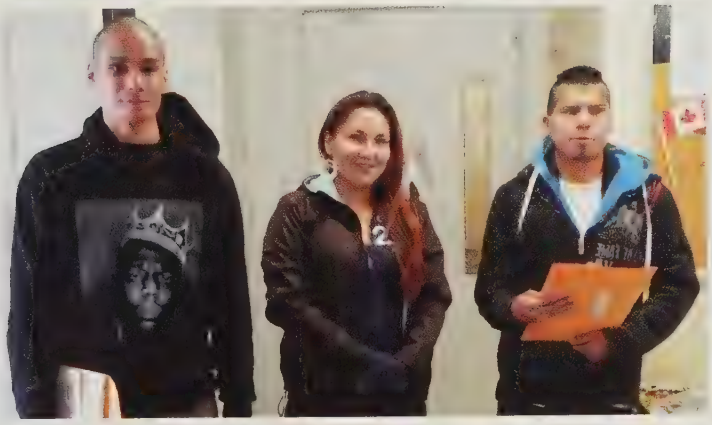
Nature seems to be the problem. From weeds in the garden to dust in the house, nature in all of its manifestations is messing with our civilized order. You can't flip through a magazine, other than this one, or watch TV or listen to the radio, without some reminder that nature is the natural enemy. Lawns are constantly under attack; as are decks and walkways, stone paths, roofs. Insects crawl into houses; destroy non-native flowers and plants. And as any gardener knows, gardening has little to do with nature, but with control; bending the will of the wild to a careful design.

Bending the wild—bring an animal into the house and there is the battle to control their animalness. They shed. They stink. They don't know how to flush the toilet. Luckily there are gimmicks and chemicals and training methods and if all that fails, breeding techniques, to control all that.

Then the chemicals accumulate, not just from pets, but from controlling insects and nature, and cleaning things around the house, including the car.

So many idols. So many passive, pleasant idols that nudge away at us. What you gonna do? Well, maybe first grab the morning Joe.

Andrew Faiz is the Record's *senior editor.*



PHOTOS COURTESY OF YVONNE BEARBULL

COMMUNITY

Kenora Emergency Shelter May Have to Close

Additional funding is needed to continue the program, board says.

By Connie Wardle

The Presbyterian mission that provides the only emergency shelter in Kenora, Ont., announced it might have to close down the shelter portion of its operations as of June 1 "due to severe financial restraints."

The Kenora Fellowship Centre—also called Anamiewigummig—is owned and operated by the Presbyterian Church and offers a drop-in centre, meals and transitional housing in addition to a year-round emergency shelter for homeless and vulnerable people in the northwestern Ontario city. The shelter can sleep up to six women and 21 men.

The shelter is the most expensive of the services the centre offers, and it quickly uses up funds, said Rev. Germaine Lovelace, a board member and the minister at First Presbyterian in Kenora. "The board thought, let's cut off the most expensive arm to save the body," he said.

The board was in a similar position in November 2013 when it made an appeal ›

COMMUNITY, continued

to Presbyterian churches and the local community, he said. "People really came on board. We were able to survive for another few years until now." But it was like limping, he said.

Most of the centre's $485,000 operating budget comes from donations. Additional support is provided by the Presbyterian Church and the Kenora District Services Board, which also channels funds from the province.

Since January 2013 the mission has received a flat rate of $7,000 a month from the services board, a change in funding Executive Director Yvonne Bearbull says has contributed to the mission's deficit.

She said by the beginning of October 2014 the board faced an $80,000 shortfall.

The mission has already trimmed costs by eliminating a management position and limiting the hours the centre is open to patrons.

"We've done the best we can with all the resources that come in and work to stretch them, to be frugal," she said.

"It's a very unstable time right now for the Fellowship Centre. You're looking at a half a million dollar budget and only about 25 per cent of that is guaranteed, so there's a lot of prayer and a lot of hard work."

The board plans to work with representatives of the City of Kenora, the services board and potential community partners in the hope of finding additional funding so the current shelter can remain open, or arranging for an emergency shelter somewhere else in the community.

Although it provides the only emergency shelter in the city of about 15,000 people, the mission's building was never designed for that use.

Following a meeting on March 11, Henry Wall, the chief administrative officer of the services board, told *Kenora Online* that $40,000 could probably be found by June 1 and "we determined that we are going to continue working together."

"It's a life and death situation and we know that," said Bearbull. "And it's a very challenging place to be in right now and we just ask for prayers."

The church has a long history in the Kenora area, having run Cecelia Jeffrey residential school until 1969 when such schools became the responsibility of the federal government.

The Fellowship Centre provides a ministry of healing and reconciliation in the region.

Those who wish to support the mission can donate online at kenorafellowshipcentre.ca/page16.html or send a cheque to Box 447, Kenora, ON P9N 3X4.

Connie Wardle is the Record*'s senior writer.*

CANADIAN HONOURED FOR SERVICE TO OTHERS

Jean Vanier has been awarded the Templeton Prize, an honour granted to extraordinary individuals who are "entrepreneurs of the spirit" in the words of the late Sir John Templeton.

Vanier founded the first L'Arche community in 1964 when he invited two disabled men to live with him in a house in a northern French village. Today there are 147 communities in 35 countries worldwide—29 of them in Canada—where people with and without intellectual disabilities live together, and more than 1,500 Faith and Light groups in 82 countries offering mutual solidarity and support.

"As you know, people with intellectual disabilities are not able to assume important roles of power and of efficacy," he said in remarks prepared for a press conference on March 11 at the British Academy in London. "They are essentially people of the heart. ... When those ingrained in a culture of winning and of individual success really meet them, and enter into friendship with them, something amazing and wonderful happens. They too are opened up to love and even to God."

As a Roman Catholic, Vanier has also worked to nurture interfaith understanding and dialogue around the world.

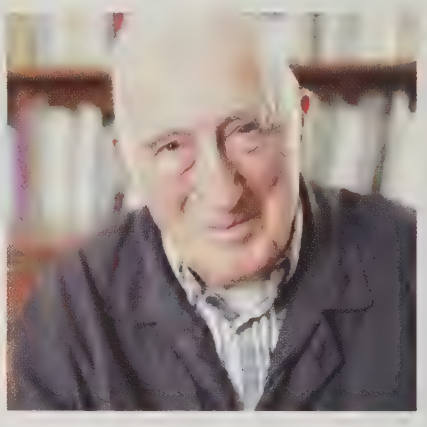


PHOTO BY JOHN MORRISON/TEMPLETON PRIZE

The Templeton Prize is valued at £1.1 million (over $2 million Canadian dollars) and is awarded annually by the John Templeton Foundation. Vanier will formally receive the prize at a ceremony on St Martin-in-the-Fields, London, on May 18. —*CW*

2015 Convocations

PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE, MONTREAL

When: May 7, 2015 at 7:30 p.m.
Where: The Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul, Montreal
Keynote speaker: John Hall, C.M., Th.D, emaritus professor of Christian theology in the Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University.
Honorary degrees: Doctor of Divinity (honoris causa) to Rev. W. G. Sydney McDonald and Rev. Stewart Folster.

Special note: This year's convocation will be a first-time-ever joint event of all three theological colleges of the Montreal School of Theology in celebration of its 100th anniversary.

KNOX COLLEGE, TORONTO

When: May 13, 2015 at 7:30 p.m.
Where: Convocation Hall, University of Toronto
Keynote speaker: The Right Rev. Mark MacDonald, National Indigenous Anglican Bishop, speaking on "At Minus Fifty Degrees Denominational Differences Melt."
Honorary degree: Doctor of Divinity (honoris causa) to the Right Rev. Mark MacDonald.

VANCOUVER SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY (ST. ANDREW'S HALL)

When: May 11 at 7:00 p.m.
Where: Shaughnessy Heights United Church, Vancouver
Keynote speaker: Professor Gregory Jones, Senior Strategist for Leadership Education at Duke Divinity School, speaking on "Christ-Shaped Leadership in a Time of Disruption."
Honorary degrees: Doctor of Divinity (honoris causa) to Mr. Philip Owen, OC, and Rev. Dr. Edwin Searcy.

New Head of LMA Announced

The Life and Mission Agency Committee announced in March that Rev. Ian McDonald has been named the new general secretary of the Life and Mission Agency, pending approval by the 141st General Assembly this June. His appointment will take effect Sept. 1. McDonald replaces Rev. Dr. Rick Fee, who is retiring following a career in ministry that began in 1976.

McDonald was ordained by the Presbytery of Halifax-Lunenburg in 2001. He served at First, Chatham, Ont., and Calvin, Toronto, has worked in camping ministry and as Minister in Residence at Knox College, Toronto. In 2011, he was appointed associate secretary of Canadian Ministries.

"I have appreciated his knowledge of and love for the church, his quick intellect, his grasp of the complex issues facing Christianity and, more particularly, the Presbyterian family within that faith," Rick Fee told the *Record*. *—AM with files from the LMA Committee*

EAA Becomes Part of WCC

The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance will be reconstituted as part of the World Council of Churches, the organizations announced in March.

As an ecumenical initiative of the WCC, the EAA will be accountable to the WCC's general secretary and its administration will be carried out by the parent organization. It will still raise its own funds and its board of directors will continue to operate as a committee.

"The EAA was founded on the principle that the more we can speak and act together, the stronger our impact for justice will be," said Rev. Dr. Rick Fee, chair of the EAA board of directors and general secretary of the Presbyterian Church's Life and Mission Agency. "This is a fundamental ecumenical principle which the EAA has developed creatively and effectively for over a decade."

The EAA is made up of a coalition of 84 churches and Christian organizations, including Presbyterian World Service & Development, dedicated to campaigning on global issues. The alliance is currently focusing on food security and sustainable agriculture, and previously focused on issues related to HIV and AIDS.

The WCC represents 345 churches worldwide including the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and provided administrative support for the EAA from its founding in 2000 until it became an independent association in 2009. *—CW*

BE CHURCH

Coming Together to Pray

Two international events highlight the importance of prayer. By Amy MacLachlan

The Bible tells us to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17) and the international church community seeks to honour that call each year by joining hearts and minds during two different winter events.

During the week of January 30, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and then on March 6th for the World Day of Prayer, special services and celebrations were held all over the world.

Two Presbyterian congregations wanted to share their experience in these events. Here are their stories.

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2015

Calvin, Kitchener, Ont.

Christians are reminded of Jesus' prayer for his disciples "they may be one so that the world may believe" (John 17:21). From January 18 to 25, we joined with the ministers in our neighbourhood and celebrated our Christian unity through worship and song.

The theme for our week of prayer came from John 4:7: "Jesus said to her: 'Give me a drink.'" Five churches in Kitchener joined to celebrate. The week started with a Sunday afternoon service at the Highland Baptist Church with worship and singing. Calvin Presbyterian served as the host church under the leadership of Dr. Rev. Frank Szatmari. Over the next five days, ministers from the Baptist, Roman Catholic and United churches took turns preaching the message at Calvin. The sermons focused on the theme under the headings of Testimony, Annunciation, Renunciation, Denunciation, and Proclamation. It is our hope that in future years all churches will join in worship, celebrating our Christian unity.

In heaven there will be no Presbyterians. It will only matter that we loved our Lord Jesus Christ and that we served him well during our time here. *—Bonnie Street, Calvin, Kitchener, Ont.*

Each year, the prayer service is written by the women of a different country. This year, it was the Bahamas

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

St. Andrew's, Duncan, B.C.

"Through our participation in the World Day of Prayer, we affirm that prayer and action are inseparable and that both have immeasurable influence on the world," says the website of the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada.

The World Day of Prayer service in Duncan B.C., in which seven churches took part, was hosted by the Ladies Guild of St Andrew's Presbyterian. It was an ecumenical service with participation from Duncan United, St. John's Anglican, St. Peter's Anglican, Duncan Christian Reformed, New Life Baptist, St. Edward's Roman Catholic and St. Andrew's Presbyterian. The service is hosted on a rotation basis each year, with at least one representative from each church taking part in a section of the service. Our pastor, Rev. Christopher Clarke, gave the homily.

The World Day of Prayer began when Presbyterian women in the United States called for a national Day of Prayer in 1887, and Anglican women in Canada established a national day of intercessions for mission in 1895. On Oct. 19, 1918, Presbyterian women in Canada called together representatives of five Women's Missionary boards—Anglican, Baptist, Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian —"to promote the spreading of Christ's kingdom through united prayer and action."

Today, after going through several changes and iterations, the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada coordinates the World Day of Prayer in this country and aims to speak to issues that concern women of faith. Services are held all over the world on the first Friday in March.

Each year, the prayer service is written by the women of a different country. This year, it was the Bahamas. At St. Andrew's, the Ladies Guild decorated the sanctuary with flowers and fresh fruit, and after the service guests were served traditional foods of the Bahamas.

We encourage more Presbyterian women's groups all over Canada to consider hosting a service and to encourage women from other denominations to join with them.

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6). *— Donna Einarsson, St Andrew's, Duncan, B.C.*

Faith.

Deepening your relationship with God

ISTOCK

LEADERSHIFT

The Three E's: Effectiveness

Doing the ecclesiastical math.

By Ross Lockhart

I had high hopes. I stepped onto the tee and eyed the distant fairway with optimism. One dodgy whack of a driver later, however, and the ball went flying towards the rough; my effectiveness evaporating like the crisp, summer dew of a northern Ontario morning. "You'll nail that drive on the next hole, Ross," my golf partner said encouragingly. And then the conversation turned towards effectiveness of a different kind—not on the golf course, but in the pulpit and pew.

By God's providence, I was blessed with a retired Presbyterian moderator in my first church following ordination. I was in desperate need of "pastoral seasoning" but self-aware enough to know that my new Master of Divinity degree did not mean that I had mastered divinity. Therefore, weekly on the golf course I sought out Rev. Dr. Bruce Miles for advice and support. Bruce's encouragement and honesty about his own pastoral strengths and weaknesses were such gifts to a young ›

LEADERSHIFT, continued

person in ministry. Further down the fairway I asked Bruce, "How do you know whether you are being effective in ministry?"

Bruce paused, debating between a 7- or an 8-iron, before saying, "Well, ministry is a little bit like sand between the fingertips. Some days it's hard to know how to measure whether you've been faithful and effective."

And that's just it. As we look towards a future of nourishing Christian communities and making disciples for Jesus in a post-Christendom Canada, part of our "leadershift" is in forming teaching and ruling elders who are evangelical, entrepreneurial and effective. But how do we know if we are effective in ministry? If gospel service can feel like "sand through the fingertips," how do we measure the impact of our Kingdom work?

Many congregations default to what I like to call "noses and nickels." The ecclesiastical math usually goes something like this: Sunday attendance + offering = effectiveness.

Now, don't get me wrong, numbers matter. After all, behind every number is a person who Jesus died to save. But, numbers alone are not everything. Just ask Gideon, who had to send home most of his warriors and become an underdog so that God (and not people!) might gain the glory. No, perhaps we should say that certain kinds of numbers matter more than others.

The Lilly Foundation-supported Mainline Evangelism Project, which resulted in the popular "Unbinding the Gospel" series, uncovered a certain kind of number that matters a great deal. The research found one factor in common among healthy, growing mainline congregations whether large or small, rural or urban: the number of adult baptisms. In other words, congregations that had a dedicated catechesis, taking pre-Christian people and leading them into a profession of faith and relationship with the risen Christ, were healthy communities of faith. Hmm. Some numbers do matter.

Therefore, in addition to noses and nickels, we can add any number of "measurable outcomes" when considering effectiveness in ministry today from adult conversion to Christians' on-going sanctification/spiritual depth towards the full measure of Christ to enhancing God's reputation in the community through our words and actions. "Outcome" language has become popular in education circles, including theological education, over the past several years. I worry, however, that in theological education we measure our effectiveness in producing leaders based on the outcome of graduation day. Wouldn't it be far better to measure the effectiveness of our leadership preparation five or 10 years later by studying what kind of Christian communities our graduates are shaping? That same question of effectiveness can be shared by all—pastors, ruling elders and laypeople—do our congregations reflect a more mature, passionate trust in Jesus Christ more today than five years ago? Is the Kingdom space we hold in Canada forming the kind of disciples who join God in the neighbourhood where they live, work and play to help bless and mend God's broken, yet beloved world?

When I think back to my early years in ministry I had high hopes, but no way of measuring my effectiveness. Somewhere on that northern Ontario golf course week after week, God revealed that effectiveness is not measured by human standards but Kingdom goals. Our part includes the desire to passionately follow the risen Christ and trust in his eschatological hope that is both beyond and alongside us in a real and meaningful way.

As I wacked the next tee shot that day on the golf course I observed a more encouraging result. "The Lord giveth..." I said in appreciation as the ball went straight down the fairway past the 250-yard sign.

"And the Lord taketh away," teased my golf partner. And perhaps somewhere in between lies our effectiveness in ministry.

Rev. Dr. Ross Lockhart is director of ministry leadership and education at St. Andrew's Hall, Vancouver.

ISTOCK

PROGRESSIVE LECTIONARY

What to Preach on Good Friday

This day offers challenges and opportunities. By Laurence DeWolfe

Good Friday
April 3, 2015
Psalm 22
John 18, 19 (select verses)

What to preach on Good Friday? A lot of preachers ask that question. Last year I worked with a group of preachers from across the country in an online course. The last two weeks of the course fell close to Holy Week, so we turned from our exploration of ›

PROGRESSIVE LECTIONARY, continued

There are hints and threads, but no consistent position. Yes, there are seeds of what is still the most common interpretation, substitutionary atonement or penal substitution

contemporary homiletical theory to conversation about preaching in Holy Week. Several said they didn't preach on Good Friday. A couple admitted they didn't conduct services on Good Friday anymore. Their congregations didn't seem to want them. Those who had services shared how they managed to avoid preaching: music, drama, silence. Not because they were too tired by Friday to preach. They feared they wouldn't have anything to say, or would say the wrong things.

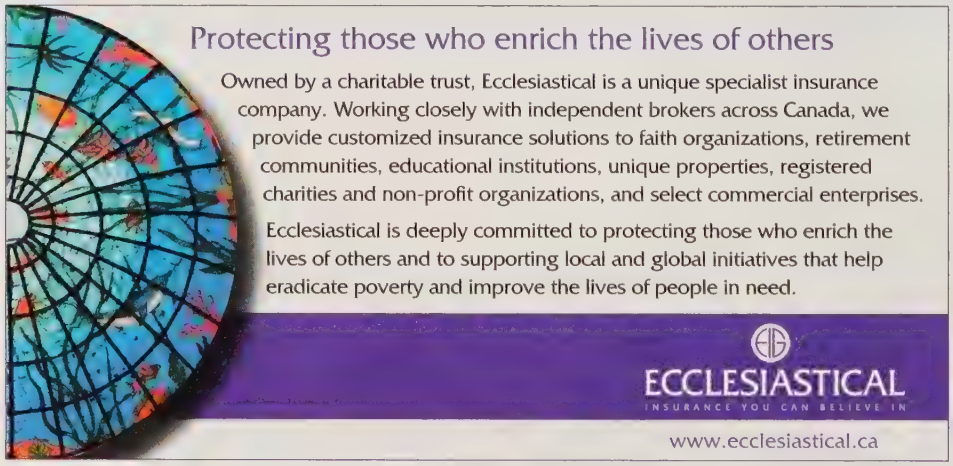
These preachers, who I believe to be representative of many more, were afraid they might upset some members of their congregations. They were afraid to say what they really believed about Jesus' crucifixion. To be more specific, they didn't accept the doctrine of atonement by penal substitution. They assumed many people in their congregations did. These folks, after all, love to sing "The Old Rugged Cross." I had to agree that much of the hymnody we call on, and a lot of the music chosen for choirs determined to sing cantatas, reflects just one theology of atonement. Good Friday probably isn't the best time to ignite a theological debate. But I challenged these mainline Protestant preachers to consider the likelihood that a significant number of people within their congregations may not hold any hard and fast interpretation of the crucifixion. More likely, there were as many questions among their folks as the preachers wrestled with in their own hearts.

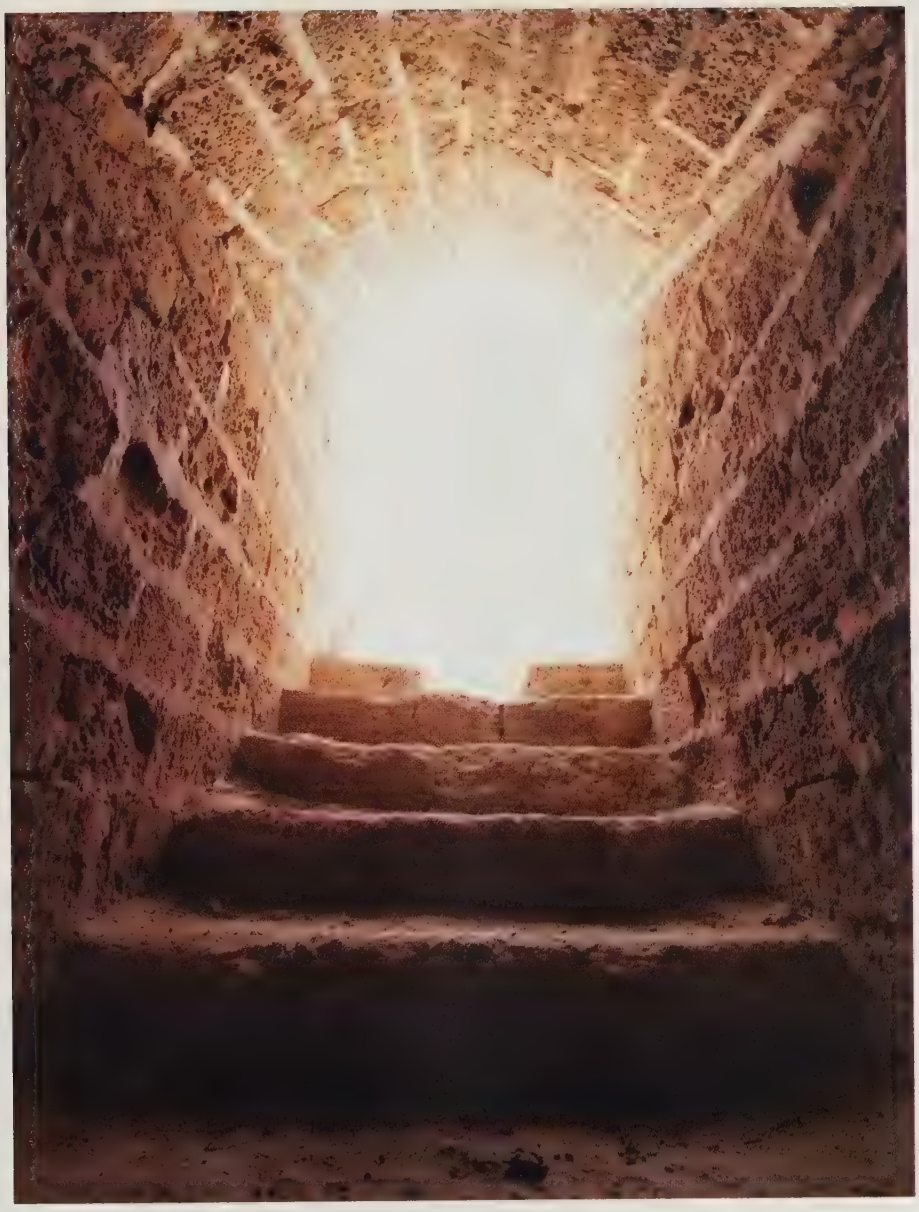
The first Christians wrestled, too. By the second generation of the church, the era of the New Testament, disciples came to some conclusions about the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross for them and the world. New Testament texts support at least four interpretations of the significance of the crucifixion: Christ the ransom; Christ the Victor; Christ the representative; and Christ the sacrificial substitute. There are hints and threads, but no consistent position. Yes, there are seeds of what is still the most common interpretation, substitutionary atonement or penal substitution. The doctrine didn't take the finished form it now has for a good nine or 10 centuries after the New Testament. St. Anselm of Canterbury crafted the frame many Christians now fit around the old story.

Suppose some people in your congregation think they know all they need to know about what the cross means for them. How do you, gently, get them to consider there are other ways of exploring the mystery of the cross? How do you reassure those who can't go along with so much Good Friday piety? Stay with the story. Look to the earliest interpretations of Jesus' crucifixion we can find. The book of Acts represents some of the first Christian proclamations. Skip ahead to the first reading for Sunday (Acts 10:34-43) for a hint to what the early church believed. Jesus fulfilled a mission God gave him. The authorities of religion and empire could not accept someone who did what he did and represented what he represented. So they executed him as a common criminal, a potentially dangerous but easily expendable outsider. But. God. But God, as our psalm for today suggests, doesn't leave the apparently defeated in the depths. And that, says Peter, has changed everything.

Stay with the story today. Save the discussion of the ongoing and eternal significance of the cross for Christians and the world for another day. All Presbyterians could benefit from a serious exploration of the breadth of theologies of the cross. Just not today.

Rev. Dr. Laurence DeWolfe teaches at Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax.





ISTOCK

RENEWAL

He is Risen!

He is risen, indeed! By Fred Stewart

It is an ancient liturgy translated into countless tongues and spoken by billions since the historical event of the resurrection. It is the core of the Church's Easter worship. It is the centre of Christian belief over the past two millennia.

It is the announcement that reminds us that Jesus is who Jesus says he was and Jesus has done what Jesus said he would do. It speaks to the awesome power of God that breaks into our physical world and demonstrates supremacy over life and death.

It is the proclamation that death, which seemed so inevitable for all creation, not only could be defeated, but was convincingly overcome for all whose futures were woven into Christ's. The scripture describes believers as those who are in Christ and those who have Christ in them. Our eternity cannot be separated from his. ›

RENEWAL, continued

It is the assertion of a primary truth. The death and resurrection of the God/man Jesus is the centre point of our faith. God loved us so much that He came into our world to reclaim us and save us. He came humbly to give Himself for us in order to redeem us.

It is the rallying cry for billions who stand witness to the fact that our world's history was impacted forever by a carpenter's son in the backwaters of the Roman Empire who briefly taught in parables 2,000 years ago. Something miraculous happened to inspire a faith and a Church to explode like a creative big bang that is still creating communities of Christ followers.

It must be the foundation of the gospel we share. Jesus Christ was more than a great teacher. His importance transcends any philosopher. He exceeds any who brought moral and ethical truth. Jesus is who he said he was. Jesus does what he says he will do. He and the Father are one. He must die but after three days will rise again.

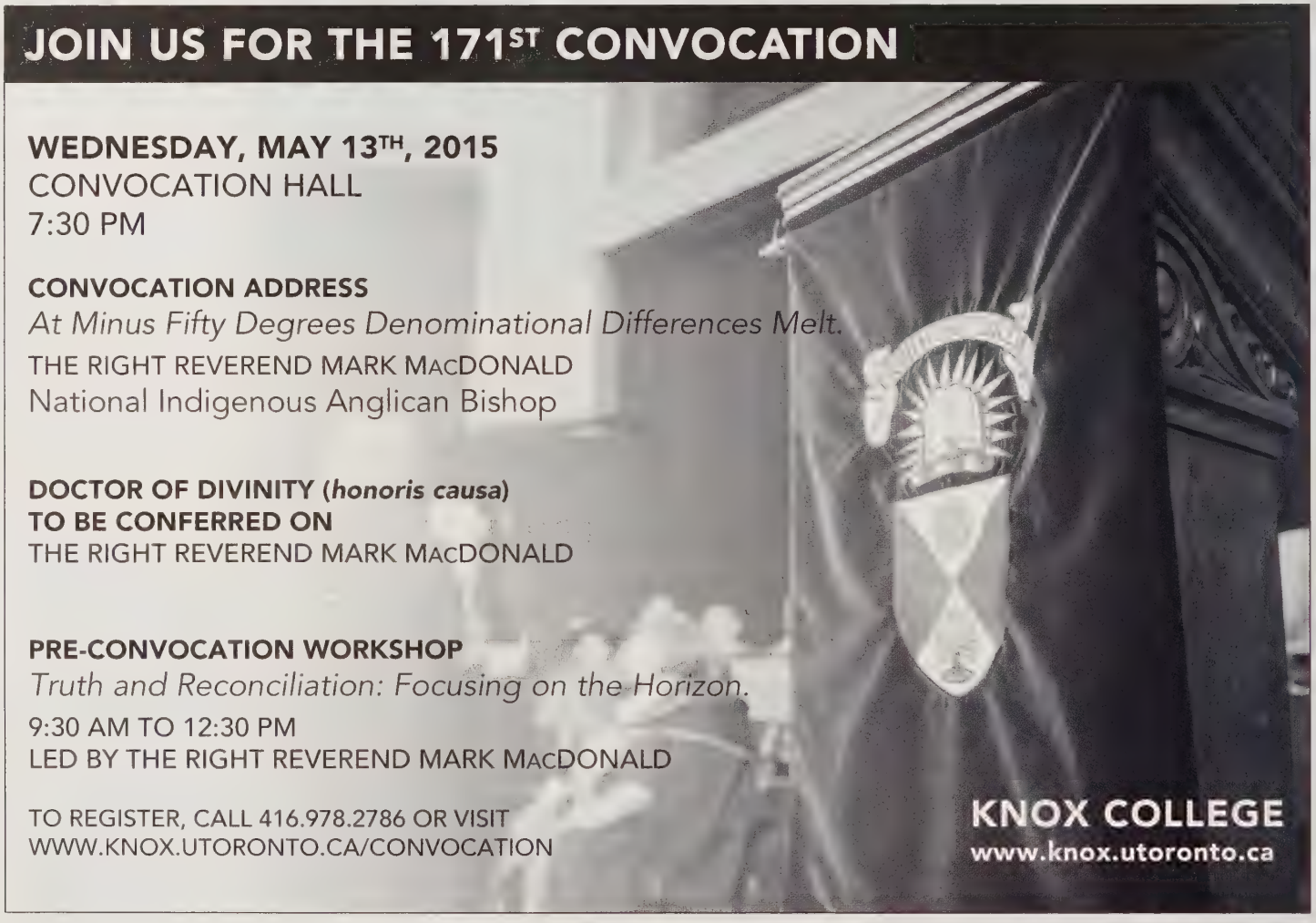
Paul, the archetypical missionary, sums it up for us in 1 Corinthians 15:

"...and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that He raised Christ—whom He did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied."

He is risen!

He is risen, indeed!

Rev. Fred Stewart is executive director of the Renewal Fellowship, and minister at St. Andrew's, Bolsover, and Woodville Community Churches.



ISTOCK

ORDINARY RADICAL

Face to Face

Small things can lead to big change. By Amy MacLachlan

In his book *The Irresistible Revolution*, Shane Claiborne argues that "we live in a world that has lost its appreciation for small things. ... We want to supersize our fries, sodas and church buildings. But amid all the supersizing, many of us feel God doing something new, something small and subtle ... a gentle whisper amid the chaos. ... Little movements of communities of ordinary radicals are committed to doing small things with great love."

It is this love that motivates our actions; that propels us to somehow help change the things we see as wrong or unjust. It is God's love for us that enables us to act. And it is small, because, in the ›

APRIL'S CHALLENGE

Meeting face to face.

This month I'll take "small things with great love" a step further and focus on creating community by meeting others in person. Stepping out of my comfort zone, searching for opportunities to learn and grow, getting to know the people behind the charities. It is only then, argues Shane Claiborne, that we start asking questions about the system, and start taking steps to make things right. I already have a couple of ideas up my sleeve. Be sure to follow my Ordinary Radical blog to see what I'm up to!

end, for most of us, that's all we can do.

I'm still trying to figure out exactly what all of this means for me and my family; how it will and should impact our daily tasks and interactions. To aid me in my musings, I asked some of my fellow *Record* bloggers to share their thoughts on what "small things with great love" means to them. (Keep an eye on my blog for more!)

Rev. Matthew Ruttan told me about cultivating love through continual prayer; even prayer about the small things: "Thank you, Lord, for my daughter blowing me a kiss!"

Patricia Schneider, who lost her husband several years ago, told me, "the kindest thing someone can do for me is to mention my husband by name. It warms my heart to know that he is not forgotten."

Pat also mentioned something else: "One of the nicest things that someone did for me was to ask for an afternoon to come over and review some of the things I had said at our Bible study. It was an opportunity to share personally, one-to-one, about my beliefs."

I love that this is something that stands out for Pat as a "small thing with great love." Being able to "share personally, one-to-one" is a crucial ingredient to building community, and as Claiborne would say, to affect change.

When we meet each other face-to-face, when we really get to know someone, learn of their struggles, hear about their lives, and know their names, then we become discontent with whatever is keeping them down.

"It is a beautiful thing when folks in poverty are no longer just a missions project but become genuine friends with whom we laugh, cry, dream and struggle," Claiborne writes. "One of the verses I have grown to love is the one where Jesus is preparing to leave the disciples and says, 'I no longer call you servants. ... Instead, I call you friends.' Servanthood is a fine place to begin, but gradually we move toward mutual love, genuine relationships."

"Once we are actually friends with folks in struggle," he continues, "we start to ask why people are poor, which is never as popular as giving to charity."

Last Christmas, my book club took on a little project to help make the first couple weeks easier for a single mom (let's call her Catherine) who had just had her fourth baby. We baked cookies, made dinners to freeze then pop in the oven, knitted blankets, gave diapers and baby clothes and toys, as well as some special treats for mom. A friend and I then drove out to Catherine's home to deliver the rather large number of items the group had pulled together for this family.

It was a small, bustling place with a friendly dog and excited kids who were happy to have visitors postpone their bedtimes. The baby boy was fast asleep, and mom, while happy and welcoming, was noticeably and expectedly tired. We learned the names of all the kids; chatted a bit; held hands and said a quick prayer together before leaving.

It was different from simply giving to a charity. We had met. Face to face. And now I think of Catherine a lot.

We're actually planning another get together during March Break (I'm writing this in early March), and I've already gone shopping for books for the kids, and am thinking about which sweet treats to bake and bring along. I want to get to know Catherine more; to listen to her story; to hear and understand how she got to where she is today. Creating, in a small way, community.

"Small acts with great love flow from an awareness that every inch of our world and existence is sacred," Matthew Ruttan told me, "and every inch is deserving of the love God had in mind when He put it all together."

I'm starting to discover how true—and how important—those words really are.

Amy MacLachlan is the Record's *managing editor. Follow her weekly blog at presbyterianrecord.ca.*

St. Mark's Presbyterian Church in Don Mills, Ontario,

will celebrate it's 60th Anniversary on Sunday, May 3, 2015.

We welcome all who would like to join us. Our special guest preacher will be the **Rev. Dr. Dorcas Gordon.**

We will also welcome donations to our anniversary project: Doctors Without Borders.

Life

Thoughts and inspiration for your daily life

ISTOCK

FAMILY

Vanished

Remembering what once was.

By Patricia Schneider

Yesterday I sat in the living room and watched as my two daughters chattered away. I really felt I was invisible. They were so involved in their conversation that they had completely forgotten I was in the room. It made me feel like I had vanished.

Actually, I wasn't the least bit hurt. Their father was no longer in the room and I knew that someday I would not be in the room, either ... and that is part of the circle of life and death.

There was comfort in the scene. My two girls would carry on; perhaps remembering together incidents in the past (and hopefully being kind about those memories) and someday my grandchildren would do the same thing.

The story of our lives is continually being written and rewritten. ›

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FAMILY, continued

Last year we celebrated the 100th birthday of our little town. When we arrived it was about 8,000-strong and now it is closing in on 60,000.

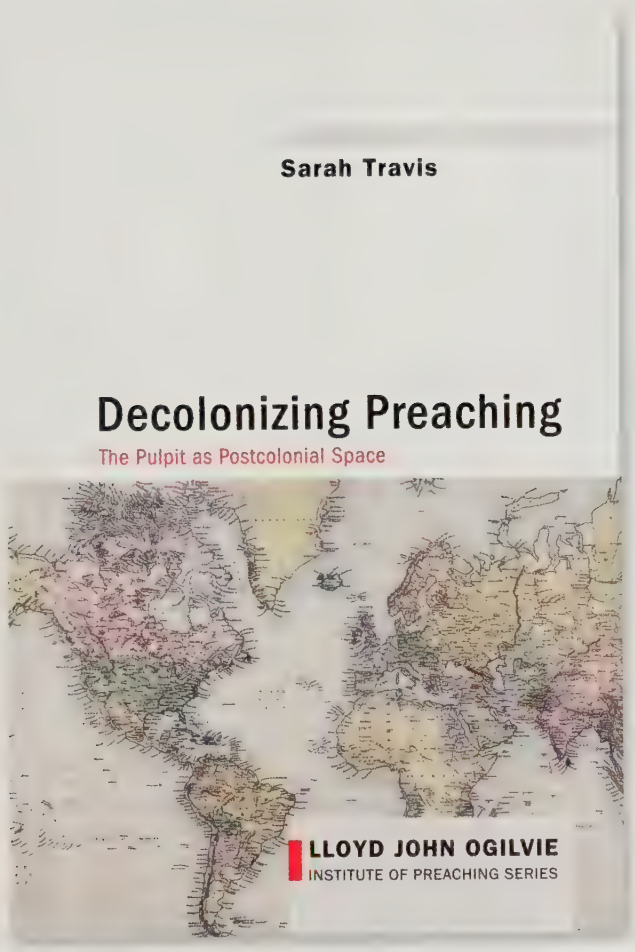
I like to feel we were a part of its makeup. The small corner store we established still bears the name we gave it, but several other businesses we've had have changed hands so many times they are unrecognizable. But we once helped shape them into the roles they now play.

That said, to the citizens of this town today, we have vanished. Oh yes, there are some who still remember my husband, and if you go down to the local archives you will find some stories of what once was.

My nephew was over for coffee this morning and we spent some time remembering what things were like in 1963 when we arrived here. He is now a grandpa and I am a great-grandma. I met him when he was four years old, before Harry and I were married. His mother has been gone for 20 years and I have become his surrogate mom. He has memories of my past that my girls don't have ... memories of my hometown and the folks there; but save for the two of us those times are long gone ... vanished! Schools that were such a part of the past have vanished, as have the teachers. Even family members have gone, as four of my sisters are but memories. Life keeps turning the pages and a new chapter is written.

But God is the same yesterday and today—loving me, moulding me, testing me and equipping me to adapt to His plan. It seems He still has some work for me to do. I haven't vanished from the scene quite yet, but I hope when I do I will leave a few good memories for those left behind.

Patricia Schneider is a proud mother and grandmother living in Alberta. She blogs at presbyterianrecord.ca.



BOOK REVIEW

Thinking Past Empire

An introduction to postcolonial theory.

By Laurence DeWolfe

DECOLONIZING PREACHING:
THE PULPIT AS POSTCOLONIAL SPACE

By Sarah Travis
Cascade Books

This is a book about humility. That's genuine humility, which preachers in our part of the world often lack. We talk about humility and then demonstrate that we're not prepared to attend to voices other than our own, or to the Bible as others may read it. Sarah Travis invites Western preachers to risk participating in postcolonial conversations. She offers a challenge to recognize and value, even to privilege for our good, the voices and experiences of those who have been the objects of Western political, economic and theological imperialism.

In the first section, "The Omnipresence of Empire," Travis discusses the history of the Western church and its relationship with colonizing imperial forces. Readers who lean leftward will find her refusal to paint the history of missions in black and white unsatisfactory. She looks through a lens those more conservative in theology and politics will find hard to accept. Travis insists that any reduction of complexity to either-or duality is characteristic of colonizing forces.

She is also quick to identify her own position as a privileged, educated, white Canadian who presumes to critique and pose an alternative to a way of using power in the world that she benefits from. Most preachers who will read this book share Travis' social location. How dare we speak of and to a world of others from whom we take much more than we will ever give? ›

I stepped cautiously beyond the borders of my assumptions as I met Indian teachers and theological students. We were all Christians. But we were not all the same

In the second section Travis proposes a way in which her readers can preach. Travis offers a response to empire grounded in a theology of the Social Trinity. "The life of God-in-Trinity provides a theological foundation both for a constructive reimagining of human relationships damaged by colonizing discourse and for the deconstruction of colonizing discourse." The relationship of the three within the Trinity, as described by Jürgen Moltmann and others, sets a pattern for human relationships. Creator, Son and Spirit are distinct and unique, yet difference does not result in separation or entail hierarchy. A Christian's view of the world can reflect the diversity within unity that is the nature of God. Yet the way we read texts, the way we describe the world and people, and the basic vocabulary of our preaching may reflect ways of understanding that perpetuate what the father of postcolonial thought, Edward Said, called "othering."

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Kenosis, the self-emptying of God in the incarnation, and perichoresis, the engaging and embracing energy within the Trinity, are two key theological concepts. "True love and power originate within the context of Trinity, and all other powers that claim totality are revealed to be idols. The empire's story is not the whole story, and there is room for the voice of the subjugated other."

Travis offers preachers an introduction to postcolonial theory. This brief chapter will be especially helpful to preachers who may not be familiar with the concepts of "hybridity" and "Third Space." Third Space is a spatial term to describe the experience of meeting at the borders that mark differing cultures or contexts. In Third Space, difference can be recognized "without an assumed or imposed hierarchy."

In the third section of the book, Travis offers "A Toolbox for Decolonizing Preaching."

"To decolonize preaching is to imagine a human community shaped by discourses of love and freedom, rather than dominance and captivity." Preachers can learn to read the Bible and preach with "postcolonial imagination" and suggests disciplines that can help shape imagination. She offers readings of several familiar texts, including the story of Jesus and the Syrophoenician woman (Mark 7:24-30). These readings challenge the default position of many Western preachers, who believe there can only be one correct interpretation of a text.

In the final chapter Travis brings together the idea of Third Space and the concept of the inner life of the Trinity as Perichoretic Space, "a living space, a space made within God's own self for the created order." The goal of decolonizing preaching is not to further flatten the world. It is to preach in ways that invite all into an experience of Third Space. This is possible, even in the whitest, most homogeneous Presbyterian congregation in Canada.

All preaching calls us toward Third Space but we don't always recognize or respond to that call. Preachers and congregations often retreat into the familiar and the comfortable. Can we really encounter the Word and be transformed by it if we won't step over the boundaries of our expectations and embedded beliefs? Travis calls Western preachers to a new humility grounded not only in a new openness to those we actively and implicitly "other," but also to a deeper exploration of the Trinity.

Last summer I landed in India for the first time. I stepped cautiously beyond the borders of my assumptions as I met Indian teachers and theological students. We were all Christians. But we were not all the same. As I listened, shared, and learned I entered Third Space and discovered those I met were already there. A Christian in India is already in a borderland of hybridized identity. The onus was on me to enter the space ready to be changed. This is why I believe this book is essential reading for North American preachers. The walls of Christendom have crumbled. The world of the other is the only world we have to live in.

Rev. Dr. Laurence DeWolfe teaches at Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax. He is also author of the Record's *Progressive Lectionary column.*

ISTOCK

MINISTRY

Spiritual Care Visitation

A primer on listening to people in pain. By Bonnie Thomson

People with physical ailments no longer beg by the side of the road. Some may be at home with family and many are in a hospital or care facility. As they lose connections with familiar activities, places and people, feelings of isolation coupled with debilitating illness may affect their wellbeing, self esteem and even their judgement. With the loss of customary sources of happiness, life becomes a search for meaning.

Sometimes the most helpful thing we can do is to just listen, respecting what they say, taking their ideas and feelings seriously, trying to understand, and legitimizing their feelings with observations and open questions. "It sounds like you are anxious about that." "How does that make you feel?" "I can imagine how difficult that is and I would feel the same way." By being attentive, without trying to fix things, we affirm the person and build trust. We do not make medical judgements. Instead we ask, "What does your doctor say?" We encourage them to talk. "I'm sorry you are having a hard ›

MINISTRY, continued

time. Tell me about it."

This important insight I learned during a training program for lay spiritual caregivers at the Scarborough Hospital, Toronto, led by the staff chaplain, Ajith Varghese.

We remember that people are telling their story and avoid adding our own experiences or opinions. We accept what they tell us, being fully attentive and respecting their perspective. We are patient with their hesitations and pauses. Silence can be valuable. Research shows that only 10 per cent of our communication is verbal; body language and attitude are important indicators of our respect and support.

Sometimes we visit people who are experiencing grief. Grief touches every part of life: emotionally, physically, cognitively, socially, culturally and behaviourally. Recovery requires a healing process. Although we cannot take another's pain, we can provide love and companionship to support them through the stages of mourning. We do not minimize or interrupt this process; each stage is necessary. We affirm the need for tears, and may cry with them.

Our visitation has the goal of supporting wellness, a condition that involves the spiritual as much as the physical. It includes an awareness of purpose and meaning in life. We can support someone's inner being by asking questions such as: "What gives you joy?" "Where do you find satisfaction and meaning in your life?" Remind them that they are highly valued by God who accepts and loves them.

Sometimes a person's wellbeing is complicated by feelings that interfere with their inner state and may affect connection with others. Some emotions may be seen as unacceptable. Anger, for example, may be suppressed causing the sufferer to live with frustration and tension followed by regret on the occasions when anger is expressed. Sometimes people unconsciously substitute other feelings, such as sadness, for anger and may even cry from frustration and anger without acknowledging the source. This is unhealthy because while we form feelings through our experiences and responses, we also have a lifetime of feelings inside that form us. The challenge is to integrate our lives, not box them into acceptable and unacceptable compartments of feelings.

Shame is a powerful feeling that follows the breaking of a standard, whether religious, social or cultural. It is caused by guilt, embarrassment, unworthiness or disgrace. It is an emotion so strong and painful that the person becomes the feeling. People who feel shame live with that as part of their felt identity. Guilt is related to shame and contributes to shame, but guilt is less encompassing. It is connected to specific behaviours or events; it is what a person has done, rather than who a person is.

As visitors to people who may be feeing guilt or shame, we may be observant and gently ask, "I see that you are not looking at me. Is there something bothering you? Would you like to talk about it?" If they do not speak, we accept their silence and support them by being there. Later, they may talk spontaneously. We can say, "I understand. I feel your pain." Always encourage them to be integrated and authentic, rather than covering the painful, damaging feelings with expressions of superficial spirituality. "I'm just praising God and everything is fine." God does not ignore or deny pain, but walks with us through it. This was true for the ancient Hebrews. "You are my God ... for to you do I cry all day long" (Psalms 88:2).

In the early church, Paul often spoke about the ever-present grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. People through the centuries have born witness to the presence of God in every situation. This truth is the centre of what we, as visitors, can offer people in pain.

Bonnie Thomson is a freelance writer. Learn more at bonniebeldanthomson.wordpress.com

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ISTOCK

THEOLOGY

You Have Been Saved

Considering the doctrine of predestination. By John McTavish

"A minister without theology is like a doctor without medicine; all he can do is kill you." This was a favourite saying of my principal at Emmanuel College, Earl Lautenschlager. The saying came back to me recently while reading Mary Henley Rubio's heartbreaking biography, *Lucy Maud Montgomery: The Gift of Wings.*

Lucy Maud Montgomery, the beloved author of Anne of Green Gables, was killed in a sense by a minister without theology. And the minister was her very own husband: the Rev. Ewan Macdonald.

It wasn't as if Ewan's theology was terrible through and through. It's just that he took his theology seriously, even at its weakest point, and that weakest point had everything to do with John Calvin's notorious doctrine of predestination.

"All are not created on equal terms," Calvin declares in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* "but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and, accordingly, as each has been created for one or other of these ends, we say that he has been predestinated to life or to death."

Ewan Macdonald firmly believed that he had been "predestinated" to eternal death. Nothing that his wife (especially his wife!) or anybody else ›

THEOLOGY, continued

said could persuade him otherwise. He became convinced, as Lucy Maud herself noted in her diary, that he was "eternally lost—that there was no hope for him in the next life. This dread haunted him night and day and he could not banish it."

Before blaming Calvin too much for supplying this "horrible" decree (Calvin's own word), we need to remember that all the major 16th-century Reformers believed in predestination. It's just that they didn't speak about it as often as Calvin did.

And even Calvin didn't speak about it too much. He seemed to know that the doctrine of predestination was not a doctrine that one could be especially proud of.

A reaction to this monstrous doctrine eventually took place in the 17th century when a number of Dutch Calvinists, under the leadership of Jacob Arminius, claimed that Christ died for everyone, and that the individual person was free to accept or reject God's saving grace. A century later John Wesley and the Methodists embraced Arminius's teachings.

The problem with Arminianism, however, is that it amounts to a subtle or not so subtle form of works righteousness. It's not Christ now who earns our salvation through his death and resurrection, but we ourselves who earn it through our faith in Christ.

That can't be right, said Calvin, and Luther and Augustine and Thomas Aquinas all basically agreed.

Today, however, almost all of us recoil at the thought of God wiring masses of people in such a way that they can't help falling into hell. The problem was existentially solved in the 20th century when secularism hit with such a wallop that most people had trouble believing in the afterlife at all, let alone in an unhinged deity separating the sheep from the goats for no fair-seeming reason.

The 20th century, however, also found a great Calvinist scholar taking the problem seriously, but working through to a better answer. This was Karl Barth who reformed Calvin's doctrine of predestination by grounding it in Jesus himself and not in some strange, mysterious decision taken behind the back of Christ.

We are not told: you may be saved sometimes, or a little bit. No, you have been saved, totally and for all times

Jesus is now seen as the Elect man in whom the whole of humanity is elected. At the same time, Jesus is also seen as the Rejected man, the one true reprobate in whom the whole of humanity's rejection is borne and borne away.

We catch echoes of Barth's Christ-centred correction of Calvin's doctrine of predestination in a sermon that he once preached to prisoners in a Swiss jail on the text, "By grace have you been saved" (Ephesians 2:5). Barth tells the inmates at one point: "You have been saved! We are not told: you may be saved sometimes, or a little bit. No, you have been saved, totally and for all times. You? Yes, we! Not just any other people, more pious and better than we are, no, we, each one of us."

The sermon concludes with Karl Barth urging the inmates to believe in their salvation and live in the light of the glorious truth that they have been saved. But whether they believe or not, they should know that by grace they have been saved:

"The bright day has dawned, the sun of God does shine into our dark lives, even though we may close our eyes to its radiance. His voice does call us from heaven even though we may obstruct our ears. The bread of life is offered to us, even though we are inclined to clench our fists instead of opening our hands to take the bread and eat it. The door of our prison is open, even though, strangely enough, we prefer to remain within."

The great Swiss Reformed theologian was able to proclaim the gospel in this unconditionally gracious way because he understood God's predestined love in the light of Jesus himself and not in terms of some horrible decree taken behind his back. What we see in the Son is exactly what occurs in the Father, for the Father and the Son are truly one in the unity of God's gracious Spirit.

In 1942, Karl Barth published the volume of his massive *Church Dogmatics* in which he presents his christologically-grounded and biblically attested doctrine of predestination. That same year Lucy Maud Montgomery died, the last suicidally-tinged page in her journal reading, "I have lost my mind by spells and I do not dare to think what I may do in those spells. May God forgive me and I hope everyone else will forgive me, even if they cannot understand. My position is too awful to endure and nobody realizes it. What an end to a life in which I tried always to do my best in spite of many mistakes."

The following year Ewan Macdonald also died, a broken and confused man. They both died for many reasons. But somewhere in there is a theological reason, reminding us that bad theology is like a doctor without medicine; all he can do is kill us.

Rev. John McTavish is a freelance writer and a retired United Church minister. He lives in Hunstville, Ont.

Focus

Stories of mission, ministry and community

PHOTO BY BEN SCOTT

MISSION

A Great Joy

Engineering a world of hope.

By Ben Scott

How does a structural engineering student link his passion for concrete to a passion for spreading the gospel? Three words: Engineering Ministries International.

EMI is a Christian development non-governmental organization that partners with missionaries in the majority world to "design a world of hope" for the materially poor. The ministry is composed of engineers, architects, surveyors and construction managers who use their technical talents to offer a "glass of cold water" to those in need. I was part of a recent mission as an EMI intern, where senior university students and recent graduates volunteered a minimum of four months with a team of eight professionals working on a college and orphanage in rural Myanmar.

We went to Hle Gu where we met David Biakkung, the acting director of Myanmar Mission College, and his wife Nancy. Filled with a missionary ›

MISSION, continued

What resulted from our efforts was a five-step master plan that included a new chapel, a rescue village for human trafficking victims, an elementary school, and a finished college campus

zeal himself, David learned two languages for his work—English and the local Myanmar dialect.

Moving through Myanmar is, in a sense, like moving from Quebec to British Columbia, but with an even greater change in culture. Witnessing David and Nancy's gospel call reminded me of Jesus' words:

"Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life" (Mark 10:29-30).

David and Nancy have denied themselves a comfortable life for the sake of others. Their vision to train the people of Myanmar for the people of Myanmar, teamed with a heart for orphans has made their college a small and vibrant community.

Our team was grafted into this community of believers by joining in their evening chapel services. The best way to describe their prayer style would be "one voice," where each individual prays out loud to God simultaneously. It was initially overwhelming to join in this way but as the week progressed my appreciation for our new surroundings grew. There was desperation, intimacy and utter dependence heard from these students and children as their prayers were spoken.

I was able to help the EMI team by surveying the site, creating a site map of the college, and completing some initial design checks on a new two-storey building.

What resulted from our efforts was a five-step master plan that included a new chapel, a rescue village for human trafficking victims, an elementary school, and a finished college campus. When David saw the finished results, he said it was "better than his dreams."

Presenting our design to the college community was one of the great joys of being in Myanmar.

We were asked to dress in *longyi*, the traditional men's bottoms, for the presentation. The children's and students' faces lit up when they saw us enter into the presentation room showing off the local fashion. Many oohs and aahs could be heard as we shared our vision for the campus.

When I started my engineering education I had no idea of the journey that God was preparing me for. I was reminded of Paul's words in Ephesians 2:10, "For we are what He has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life."

I look forward to what else He has prepared for me!

Ben Scott is an engineer in training working in Barrie, Ont. Before volunteering with EMI, Ben completed his engineering education at the University of Waterloo. He currently attends Knox, Toronto.

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THE WAY

Painting Christ's Passion.

By Andrew Faiz

Peter Goudy is a child of Central, Cambridge. He was born into, raised by and has been a lifelong member of the stately Presbyterian institution in the heart of the Ontario city. Now a grandfather, he remembers when the Church of Scotland congregation did not acknowledge Lent; when the Christmas service was held on the Sunday evening nearest to Christmas Day. His memories sound like the cliché of the dour Scottish Presbyterianism common in ›

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Canadian culture.

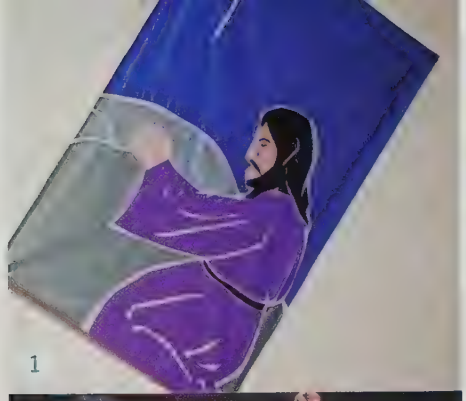
Standing inside the surprisingly well-lit sanctuary of the 1880 Gothic Revival building, Goudy points to the Lenten banners as a symbol of how Central has changed. That change is well illustrated in the works of art representing the Stations of the Cross, or The Way, hanging around the room.

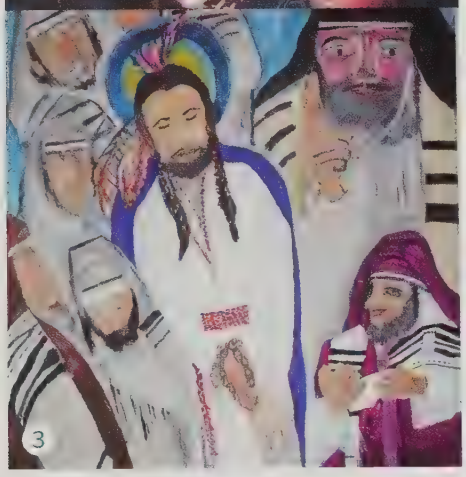
Ubiquitous in Roman Catholic churches, the Stations of the Cross are a visual representation of Christ's Passion, with a dozen or so paintings of biblical passages arranged as a meditative pilgrimage. A centuries old tradition, layered with the encrustations of time, the Stations have been mostly abandoned by Protestants. In recent decades, however, they have been reimagined by Reformed congregations; a way of bringing spiritual disciplines back to daily life.

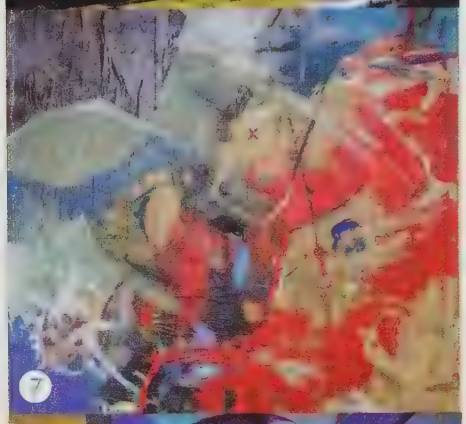
Central's minister, Rev. Aubrey Botha held studies during Lent on the scripture story and the works of art.

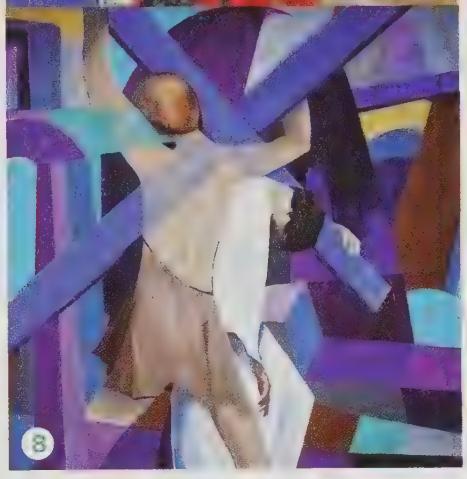
With permission granted through Presbyterian process, Goudy approached artists within the congregation and across the city and beyond. He gave them the biblical passages and examples of well-known paintings. Not all the artists are Christians, but all the artists embraced scripture and allowed themselves to be led by it.

Take your time as you go through these pages; read the passages in your Bible, allow the art to open new meditations in your heart.









1) JESUS IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE.
CARLOS SIMOES, CENTRAL
Matthew 26:36-41
Simoes is a kite maker. For him, Jesus' prayers in the garden soar to the sky.

2) JESUS IS BETRAYED BY JUDAS.
CARRAVAGIO, ITALY 1602
Mark 14:43-46
Unable to find a local artist, Goudy turned to a master.

3) JESUS IS CONDEMNED BY THE SANHEDRIN.
ROSEMARY GRANT, CAMBRIDGE
Luke 22:66-71
Grant is a retired United Church minister and a Cambridge artist. She represents Christ as a Canadian Aboriginal, updating the story to our times.

4) JESUS IS DENIED BY PETER.
ALISTAIR MCLLWRAITH, CENTRAL
Matthew 26:69-75
McIlwraith personalized the story by taking a selfie; himself as Peter denying Christ.

5) JESUS IS JUDGED BY PILATE.
ROSEMARY GRANT, CAMBRIDGE
Mark 15:1-5, 15

6) JESUS IS JUDGED BY PILATE, ECCE HOMO.
ANTONIO CISERI, ITALY, 1871
John 19:1-5
Unable to find a local artist, Goudy turned to this iconic painting, Behold the Man.

7) JESUS BEARS THE CROSS.
LAURIE WONFOR NOLAN, CAMBRIDGE
John 19:6, 15-17
Not an active Christian, Nolan is a local artist who uses newspapers as a base for her collage. After pasting some arbitrary news sheets on her canvas, Nolan noticed a representation of Christ in the lower left quadrant. The news stories represent human sins Christ carries on the cross.

8) JESUS HELPED BY SIMON OF CYRENE TO CARRY THE CROSS.
JUDY CURRIER, DUNDAS
Mark 15:21
Working in a cubist style, Peter Goudy's sister Currier melds the cross with Simon and Christ. We are all linked by the Cross. ›

PHOTOS BY JOANNA HAUGHTON

9) JESUS IS CRUCIFIED.
JOHN MCDONALD, CENTRAL
Luke 23:33-34
The elegant stained glass design borrows heavily from classical iconography.

10) JESUS PROMISES HIS KINGDOM TO THE GOOD THIEF.
PETER GOUDY, CENTRAL
Luke 23:39-43
Goudy paints each week. This deceptively simple painting speaks volumes. Consider the waves of the colours.

11) JESUS SPEAKS TO HIS MOTHER.
LINDA ROBERTS, CALIFORNIA
John 19:25-27
Linda Roberts is wife of Rev. Mark D. Roberts, whose devotional on the Stations of the Cross inspired Goudy to try the same at Central.

12) JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS.
DALENE DE BRUYN, CENTRAL

13) JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS.
JEANETTE KOK, CENTRAL

14) JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS.
TIM SCHMOLTZ, KITCHENER
Luke 23:44-46
Three representations of the same passage. Consider how all three artists speak, each using classical iconography in new ways, to the hope inside this moment of hopelessness.

15) JESUS IS PLACED IN THE TOMB.
ARMINTA CARMICHAEL, CENTRAL
Matthew 27:57-60
Two bowls. The larger bowl is the tomb. The smaller bowl is Christ. Inside the Christ bowl you can place your own prayers. The larger bowl cracked while being fired. Carmichael chose to leave it like that. The tomb is cracked. Your prayer will rise with Christ.

The Stations are traditionally placed, as they were at Central, around the nave. The resurrection is represented by the sanctuary.

Andrew Faiz is the Record*'s senior editor. Photographs by Joanna Haughton. The* Record *thanks Central, Cambridge, Peter Goudy and all the artists for their contribution.*

Loving the Earth

Searching for hope in the quest to address climate change.

By Connie Wardle

PHOTOS BY AARON ROMERO/NURPHOTO/REX

More than 400,000 people flooded the streets of New York City last September, sporting slogan-covered t-shirts and carrying signs. The numbers included celebrities, scientists, politicians and other public leaders. One of the banners said simply, "This is what love looks like." Called the People's Climate March, it was the largest such gathering to date, joining 2,600 rallies in 162 countries.

While it was taking place, I was in another part of the city covering the Interfaith Summit on Climate Change for the World Council of Churches. The WCC hosted the event in partnership with Religions for Peace.

There was energy and passion there, too and it was great to see prominent faith leaders speaking out. There were many powerful moments. But it bugged me that we weren't part of the march. The original intent, I was told, was for the faith leaders to participate. But apparently the date of the march had changed and the plans for the faith leaders' summit had not. I remember thinking it was a churchy thing for us to do. To stick to the plan when circumstances change. To do our own thing inside the walls of a seminary while everyone else was out in the street.

Despite our absence, many faiths were visible among the demonstrators. Sailing through the sea of people was a replica of Noah's Ark—a symbol that has been taken up by Jewish and Christian groups in their calls for action on climate change. The ark is a sign of hope, of life in the midst of what can sometimes feel like disaster, or drowning.

WE'VE ALL HEARD THE DIRE NEWS. Sea ice is decreasing, the ocean is becoming warmer and more acidic, ocean levels are rising, extreme precipitation will probably become more intense and frequent, and chances are heat waves will last longer and will be more severe. According to the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, without additional efforts to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, warming by

Demonstrators at the People's Climate March, New York City, Sept. 21, 2014.

the end of this century will lead to a "high risk of severe, widespread, and irreversible impacts globally."

For some people the impacts are immediate. Rev. Tafue Lusama, general secretary of the Congregational Christian Church of Tuvalu was among the faith leaders I met at the summit.

Tuvalu is nine coral atolls in the South Pacific Ocean and looks like something straight out of a travel brochure—white sandy beaches with shady palm trees. But the atolls are, on average, less than two metres above sea level. It is one of the smallest and most remote countries in the world.

Year after year the water is inching up those beaches. Eventually, the islands will be swallowed by the sea and the people who live there will be scattered.

Since the mid-19th century, the ocean has risen at a higher rate than the previous 2,000 years and, the IPCC predicts, the sea level will continue to rise, likely at a faster rate than has been seen in the past four decades.

The president of the island nation has said climate change is "like a weapon of mass destruction."

Anything that challenges the lives and livelihoods of a people is a mission from God, and as believers we must fight against it, Lusama told me. "For my church, this means life."

When there's a sudden tragedy, a tsunami or a hurricane or a flood that destroys people's homes or strips away their livelihoods, we rally to send money and prayers and support. But this is a slow motion tragedy—a disaster that's happening by millimetres, by fractions of degrees over the years of our lives and the lives of our children.

The most heartbreaking thing is that it's probably already too late for Tuvalu. Even if the world was to rally and make heroic sacrifices and drastically cut all of its greenhouse gas emissions tomorrow, the gases already in the air will continue to be there. Carbon dioxide, the most significant greenhouse gas, can take anywhere from 20 years to several hundreds of thousands of years to be ›

Spiritual Practices

Simplicity. Living with simplicity is valued highly in some Christian traditions like Quakerism. We fill our lives and homes with all kinds of stuff we don't need and rarely use, to the point where we get stressed about it. It takes its toll on the planet, too. Ditch the stress and the shopping, and focus on cultivating simplicity in your life. It will help you realize what you really value.

Fasting. This is an ancient (and very biblical) practice that involves going without something—usually food—for a period of time. It's a way of emptying ourselves to make space for God and denying things we want as we listen for what God wants. Some Christians, including prominent church leaders, have committed to fast on the first day of each month to pray for and express solidarity with our planet. You could also try refraining from certain types of food, such as meat. Eating veggies worked out well for Daniel (Daniel 1:8-17) and as a bonus, because producing meat is more carbon-intensive than growing crops, going without meat for just one day each week could save more than 1,000 pounds of carbon emissions a year.

Sharing. The book of Acts describes early Christians holding everything in common. We don't do that. In fact, we tend to individually own a lot of stuff that we only use occasionally. Why not share some of that stuff instead? Visit the library instead of the bookstore. Share a lawn mower with a neighbour. If you live in a city, subscribe to a car sharing service instead of owning your own vehicle.

Praying. This is a biggie. There are lots of ways to pray, lots of prayers out there to use, and lots of prayer styles to try. There are also organized prayer vigils. Think about finding or organizing one in your area in advance of the December UN climate conference in Paris and pray for world leaders as they work toward an international agreement.

removed from the air by natural processes. The sea would continue to rise for centuries. It's the generations before us who would have had to act to save Tuvalu.

Lusama knows that as well as anyone. Yet he said he didn't want Tuvalu to become "a symbol of defeat."

"If we can stand our ground and tell the world they should do something and act on it now, even if Tuvalu goes down, we can save the others," he said.

GLOBAL TEMPERATURE INCREASES must not be allowed to exceed 2°C above preindustrial levels. That's the rule of thumb when it comes to climate change. We're already hovering around 1°C, and to try and keep temperatures below that 2°C threshold our global greenhouse gas emissions need to be reduced dramatically (we're talking by 40 to 70 per cent) within the next 35 years and be near zero by the end of this century.

Yet the world's emissions are higher than ever. The main greenhouse gases in the atmosphere are at concentrations "unprecedented in at least the last 800,000 years," according to the IPCC. Without additional

PHOTOS BY MELISSA HESS/WCC

Small photos: Staff and delegates at the Interfaith Summit on Climate Change, including the PCC's Rev. Rick Fee (bottom left, centre); Large photo: Iriama Margaret Lokawua of the Indigenous Women Environmental Conservation Project, and Jan Eliasson, deputy secretary-general of the UN.

This is a slow motion tragedy—a disaster that's happening by millimetres, by fractions of degrees over the years of our lives and the lives of our children

efforts, global warming is likely to blow past the 2°C danger threshold and exceed 4°C by the time children born this year turn 85.

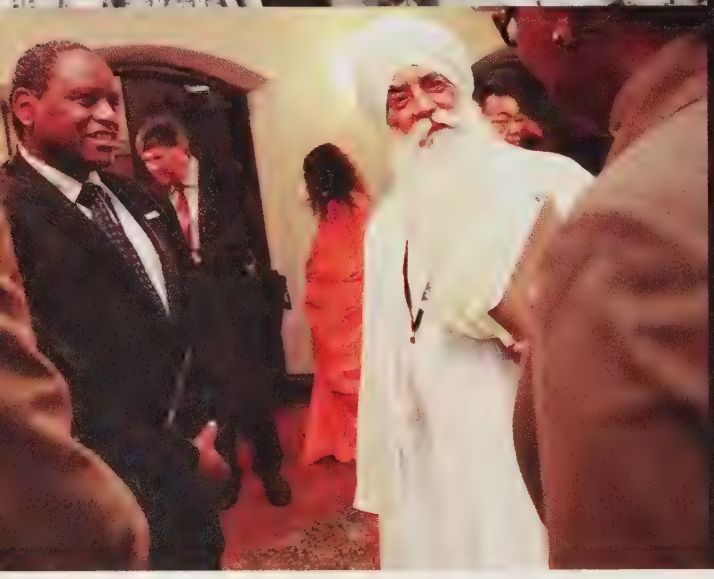
We have convinced ourselves that we have time, I realized. In the subjective span of a human life, the global temperature on the surface of the Earth *seems* to rise slowly. And it takes great discipline—and love—for us to look beyond the troubles of today. Yet in terms of geological time it's all happening in a mere fraction of a second.

Part of our problem is that we tend to think of climate change as an issue unto itself, Rev. Jim Wallis, author and founder of *Sojourners* magazine, said in his address to the faith leaders. Instead, 'climate change' plays a part in many issues with which people of faith concern themselves. Climate change contributes to poverty, food insecurity, social unrest and violence.

It's the poorest people in the world, the ones who have contributed the least to the problem, who suffer the most as a result of it. Climate change is more than environmental stewardship; it is about justice to the poor and the hungry.

Wallis called for repentance in the true sense of the word. Repentance doesn't mean we should sit around feeling sorry for what we've done or failed to do. The original Greek word *metanoia* means "you're walking in the wrong direction," he said. "You need to turn around and walk in a whole new direction."

I've heard a lot of talk in our church about how the world is changing and the church needs to change, too. But I don't think this was the kind of change the faith leaders were talking about. ›



Left: Delegates at the interfaith climate summit, including Dr. Agnes Abuom from the WCC Central Committee and Cornelia Füllkrug-Weitzel from ACT Alliance (top photo); Right: Rev. Jim Wallis speaks at an interfaith service.

We live in a country that doesn't have a stellar reputation when it comes to emissions. From 1990 to 2012, Canada's emissions grew by 18 per cent despite government pledges to stabilize them at 1990 levels by 2000 (under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) and to reduce emissions to six per cent below 1990 levels by 2012 (under the ratified Kyoto Protocol). Nearly half of the country's emissions come from oil, gas, and transportation.

Alberta's carbon-intensive bitumen and oil sands developments pose a particularly big problem. Yet they are also a symptom of an even bigger one—a world full of people and nations that depend on fossil fuels.

As a national church we sign statements and write letters to government officials. As part of ecumenical coalitions we pile up words like breakers against the rising waves. But it's too easy to come to see the crisis as a government and industry problem and let ourselves off the hook entirely.

"Panic, fear, economics, those are not really ways to motivate the human spirit to change," Rev. Dr. Rick Fee, general secretary of the Life and Mission Agency said following the faith leaders' summit and the UN climate summit, both of which he attended. "I think it's only through faith that people will recognize their responsibility to change their lifestyle. And we do have to change our lifestyle."

As individuals, as the living body of Christ and the breathing bricks that make up this church of ours, and as people who live in a country with one of the highest per capita emission rates in the world, are we willing to repent in the true sense of the word? To turn in a new direction?

AFTER THE CLIMATE MARCH, people posted photos on Twitter of abandoned disposable coffee cups and garbage allegedly left by the demonstrators, pointing out the hypocrisy of marching for the sake of the environment while leaving a trail of litter behind. And we who attended the

faith leaders' summit contributed to climate change by flying in from around the world to talk about how we can address climate change. Our individual and collective actions can be hypocritical sometimes. It ain't perfect.

Yet like all great social justice projects, addressing climate change cannot be an all or nothing endeavour. It can only be a process—sometimes one made up of many small steps. And not every problem in the world offers us so many opportunities to be part of a solution.

In the days before the UN climate summit in New York, the rooms in the Church Centre for the United Nations across the street from the UN headquarters were booked solid. No sooner did one group finish a session than another one came in. I found myself gathering pamphlets—from community organizations, religious coalitions, indigenous groups—all sharing information and ideas, encouraging each other, doing what they can where they are.

Over the course of the faith leaders' summit, there were calls for people of all faiths to fast and pray, change our diets, divest, support renewable energy projects, green our sacred places and pilgrimage sites, live our lives with our minds turned toward the well-being of our common world and the poorest people who live on it.

It was an ocean of words and voices and ideas. As a writer, I found myself turning to words spoken by Terry Tempest Williams, an author, poet and environmental activist, at an interfaith service on the day of the climate march. I turned them over and over like a stone in my pocket: "The eyes of the future are looking back at us, and they are praying that we'll be able to see beyond our own time. ... May our voices rise as the seas rise."

Above us in the shadows of the cathedral, two huge phoenix sculptures had been suspended, symbols of new life out of ashes, and of fire and light. That image, too, stayed with me.

HOPE AT THIS MOMENT IS VITAL. When it seems bleak, when it seems like not enough progress has been made, we must live as people of stubborn hope.

Christiana Figueres, who probably has the hardest job in the world as executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, asked us to help her maintain the ark of faith and the ark of love. Faith that "ultimately we human beings know what is right and we will have the courage to act on what is right" and love that will "maintain in our consciousness, in our thinking, solidarity with every human being."

Sometimes the best answer is hope. To live in hope, preach hope, work in hope, and believe that with God all things are possible. Maybe even this. At the very least, we can show the world what love looks like.

Connie Wardle is the Record's *senior writer.*

Learn More

The Social Action Handbook, produced by the Presbyterian Church in Canada, contains chapters on Ecology, Energy and Environment, and Caring for Creation. It outlines what the church has said about a number of environmental and social justice issues. You can download it at presbyterian.ca

The reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change are available at ipcc.ch

Calculate your carbon footprint. There are tons of calculators online to help you figure out what your current footprint is, and resources to help you work toward reducing it. I enjoyed the fun personal footprint quiz produced by the Global Footprint Network. footprintnetwork.or

Seek out resources. The church's Justice Ministries department has some handy links and resources, including liturgies for Earth Day (April 22). You can also check out Kairos, the ecumenical social justice coalition. And, if your church wants to become more energy efficient or work to green the community, check out Greening Sacred Spaces. Their website also has a footprint calculator that includes the cost of carbon offsets. presbyterian.ca/justice/caring-for creation | kairoscanada.org/sustainability/climate justice | greeningsacredspaces.net

Remember even small things make a difference. If you need some extra encouragement, start with this article on the webpage of the 2014 UN climate change conference in Lima: goo.gl/ZhynXy

FROM THE MODERATOR

Asking Over the Back Fence

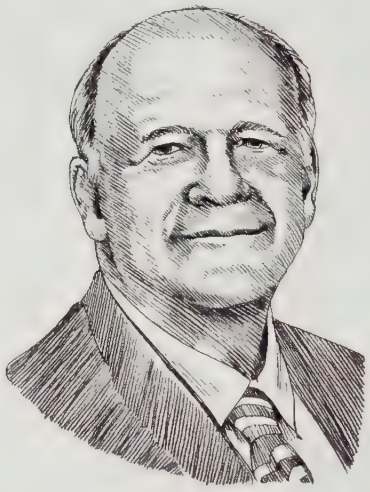
An idea to bring new people to church. By Stephen Farris

The question I am asked most frequently when I preach is some version of "What can we do to bring new people into our church?" I usually tell them a story...

Early in my ministry a friend organized a workshop on church growth, led by the "Hour of Power" ministry, the Robert Schuller people. That was fine, except that he invited me and I didn't want to go. All that possibility thinking. I turned him down. But he kept asking and I kept saying, no—until, just as in the Parable of the Widow and the Unjust Judge, it was less trouble to say yes than to keep on refusing. I showed up at the workshop with the worst possible attitude. I positively wanted the event to be terrible so I could enjoy the pleasure of complaining about it.

To my surprise, the workshop was terrific, full of good advice and intelligent strategies for looking at the church and the surrounding community through mission-shaped lenses. I chiefly remember a set of statistics they provided concerning the reasons new people showed up in church. I no longer have the materials from the workshop but I believe my memory is substantially correct. They asked new attenders in churches of varied traditions in 40 American states and seven Canadian provinces why they had decided to come to their church. The answers were fascinating:

Because of mass evangelism:	*0.3%*
Congregational outreach:	*3-5%*
They liked the minister:	*10-12%*
Because someone asked them:	*85%*



The greatest evangelist in North America is not Billy Graham or any of his successors; it's the person who will lean over the back fence and invite the neighbour

Someone leaned over the back fence and said, "I'm finding help for my life in my church. Would you like to come with me next Sunday?" ("May I take you?" is more effective than "Why don't you come?" in my experience.) The greatest evangelist in North America is not Billy Graham or his successors; it's the person who will lean over the back fence and invite the neighbour.

When I returned to my own congregation, I preached a sermon about all this. I said, "I'll never ask you to knock on doors. I'll never ask you to hand out tracts. And I'll certainly never ask you to stand on the street corner wearing a sandwich board that blares, 'Repent! The end is near!' But I will ask you to speak about the Christian faith with people with whom you have other important conversations."

One person, a man named Andy, took that sermon seriously and in the next six months brought three new families to church.

In more recent studies the exact percentages vary but some version of "someone asked me" is always at the top of the list. I still like using the Schuller statistics, however, and as a guest preacher I remember using that image of "leaning over the back fence" again.

Shaking hands after the service, a young woman said to me: "Funny you should say that about the back fence."

"Why's that?" I asked.

The young woman turned and pointed to an older woman, the organist, still seated on the organ bench. "Because that woman lives over my back fence and she invited me to this church."

"Wow!" I responded.

"I told my husband, 'We're going to go to the Presbyterian Church.' 'Why in God's name would we want to do that?' he replied. 'Because our neighbour goes to that church and I would like to grow to be the kind of woman she is.'"

If our words and our lives are both inviting, just maybe, they will come.

Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris is dean of St. Andrew's Hall at VST.

WESLEY BATES/3INABOX

People & Places

Find more online at presbyterianrecord.ca

Photographs can be uploaded at presbyterianrecord.ca.

NATIONAL OFFICES, TORONTO
It's an historic time for the Committee on History. Marilyn Repchuck (centre) is the first female convener of the church's oldest ongoing committee (it was created in 1879). Pictured are Bob Anger, Barry Cahill, Barry Mack, Repchuck, Don MacLeod and Kim Arnold. You can read more about Repchuck on our website.

BOSTON, HALTON HILLS, ONT.
The light is shining a little brighter in Boston Presbyterian thanks to a new stained glass window donated by Vic and Heather Auger and their family. Sitting at the foot of the window—which depicts Jesus welcoming the children—are Blain, Corina, Owen, Scott, Brooklyn, Heather, Vic and Heather Auger, Ashley and Michael. You can find a photo of the window on our website.

CALVIN, NORTH BAY, ONT.
Calvin decided to turn $2,250 into food. The donation, collected as a special Christmas offering, was passed on to the North Bay Gathering Place to provide more than 200 breakfasts for people who are homeless. Pictured here are Dennis Laughlin, chair of the Calvin outreach committee, Admir Fernandes, dining room supervisor at the Gathering Place, Jill Clark, executive director, and David McKee, outreach committee member.

THE OTHER SIX DAYS

A Lego Easter

Plus crazy voicemail, great music and videos. By Bradley Childs

KITSCH

BW Animations is a goofy little YouTube channel. They make old school, stop-motion animations. Mostly they use Lego and action figures and I know it sounds silly. But my kids like silly. And how many kids watch and re-watch Bible stories on their own these days? Trust me. They have a pretty good Lego Easter video that's well worth sharing with young kids. It might also be a good discussion starter for Sunday school.

FIND IT @ YouTube.com.
Search "BW animations Lego Easter."

MUSIC

I love the band Third Day. They've got a '70s country-rock feel that gets my American bones all nostalgic about the decade I lived in for a few months before my first birthday. Anyhoo, I have thoroughly enjoyed every single album they have put out and their new one is no exception. Just released on March 3, *Lead Us Back: Songs of Worship* is the band's 12th studio album. It's a two disc set (if you are still into old technology) and is available for download right off the website. Sample every song for free and see what you think. *Father of Lights* and *Lead us Back* are certainly worth a listen.

FIND IT @ thirdday.com.

AN OLD FAVOURITE

Many moons ago I came across this odd posting of a voicemail. It was left on a church answering machine. The man leaving the message identifies himself as a "preacher and a minister and an evangelist and what else... composer of music, and I also wrote a book about the 1,400 things the Lord told me." So why did he call the church? Well, it's all about a woman in the choir "wiggling her butt back and forth and side to side" in the worship service. When I first heard this guy, I couldn't stop listening to him. I just kept listening to it over and over. And as luck would have it, I've stumbled onto it again and with it a few old laughs. Oh, and there is also a song "remix" of it now, too! I love Christians! We are a colourful group of weirdoes sometimes.

FIND IT @ tatumweb.com/blog/2005/11/15/when-worship-goes-awry

thirdday.com

DISCIPLESHIP

Special thanks to Rev. Miller for this one! Right Now Media is a video library with more than 3,500 short films categorized into groups like Counselling, Youth Groups, Small Groups, Bible Studies (there are 1,000 of these), Personal Devotionals, Sunday School and a whole lot more. It's video curriculum for any and every possible person or group in your church. It has wonderful leaders like Tim Keller and Max Lucado and many more. It is like having a giant church library minus all the dust and organizing. It's about $1,000 for a year depending upon the size of your congregation but for that price it can replace your entire curriculum for every group. And here is the best part. Everyone in the church can use it—at church, at home, anywhere and anytime. Anyone! It's "Right Now" media after all.

FIND IT @ rightnowmedia.org.

Rev. Bradley Childs is minister at First, Regina.

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Tabusintac, N.B., St. John's; New Jersey, Zion; and Bartibog, St. Matthew's; Full-time three-point charge; Interim Moderator Rev. Derek Krunys, 206 Wellington St., Miramichi, NB E1N 1M7; dkrunys@hotmail.com.

Synod of Quebec and Eastern Ontario

No vacancies at this time.

Synod of Central, Northeastern Ontario and Bermuda

Alma, St. Andrew's and Elora, Knox; Full-time minister for a two-point charge; Interim Moderator The Rev. Dr. Linda J. Bell; 5237 3rd Line, Rockwood ON N0B 2K0; 519-856-9155; drbell@hsfx.ca.

Amherst Island, St. Paul's; Half-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Karen Bach; 613-353-1033; karen.bach@utoronto.ca; www.stpaulsamherstisland.com.

Brampton, North Bramalea; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Geoff Ross; 905-451-1723; geoff@standrewsbrampton.ca.

Erin, Burns and Ospringe, Knox; Two-point charge, full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Harvey Self, PO Box 276, Orangeville, ON L9W 2Z7; 519-941-1334; office@tweedsmuirpresbyterian.org.

Mississauga, Erindale; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Kristine O'Brien, c/o Trafalgar Church, 354 Upper Middle Rd. E., Oakville, ON L6H 7H4; 905-842-2800; trafalgarchurch@bellnet.ca.

Toronto, Glenview; Full-time senior minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Robert Faris; c/o St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, 73 Simcoe St., Toronto, ON M5J 1W9; 416-593-5600 ext. 229; b.faris@standrewstoronto.org.

Uxbridge, St. Andrew's-Chalmers; Full-time minister; Interim Moderators Hugh Donnelly and Rev. Dr. Lynda Reid; 814- 25 Cumberland Lane, Ajax ON L1S 7K1; jlreid@bell.net.

Synod of Southwestern Ontario

Bayfield, Knox; Part-time; Interim Moderator Rev. John Henderson, PO Box 824, Exeter, ON N0M 1S6; 519-235-2608; henderson.johncharles@gmail.com.

Fingal, Knox; Half-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Ed Hoekstra, 970 Oxford St. W., London, ON N6H 1V4; 519-471-2290 extension 222; ehoekstra@oakridge.london.on.ca.

Hamilton, Central; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Curtis Bablitz, 2138 Brant St., Burlington, ON L7P 3W5; 905-335-2640; minister@branthills.org.

Hamilton, MacNab Street; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Bob Geddes; 905-389-3001; bobgeddes@rogers.com.

Hamilton, St. Cuthbert's; Part-time stated supply; Interim Moderator Rev. Carol Wood; 905-525-9140 extension 24127; woodrink@gmail.com.

Hanover, St. Andrew's; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Alex McCombie, c/o St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 20004, Hanover, ON N4N 3T1; 519-363-5392; standrews@wightman.ca.

Ingersoll, St. Paul's; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Mark McLennan,

59 Riddell St., Woodstock, ON N4S 6M2; 519-537-2962; roundrev@rogers.com.

Mooretown, St. Andrew's and Moore, Knox; Full-time ministry in a rural two-point charge; Interim Moderator Rev. Shirley F. Murdock; 914-1275 Sandy Lane, Sarnia, ON N7V 4H5; 519-491-9892; sfm.rev@gmail.com.

Walkerton, Knox; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Owen Kim, 19 Brownlee St. S., PO Box 526, Teeswater, ON N0G 2S0; 519-392-6955; maplemission@gmail.com.

Synod of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario

Winnipeg, Man., Kildonan Community; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Matthew Brough; 204-803-7743; matt@prairiechurch.ca.

Synod of Saskatchewan

Weyburn, Knox; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Bob Wilson; 2242 Goff Place, Regina, SK S4V 2T7; 306-525-3889; wilsonret@sasktel.net.

Synod of Alberta and the Northwest

No vacancies at this time.

Synod of British Columbia

Burnaby, Burnaby Taiwanese; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Glen Davis; gjidavis@telus.net.

Cranbrook, Knox; Senior pastor; Co-Interim Moderator Rev. Doug Johns, 117 Norton Ave., Kimberley, BC V1A 1X8; 250-432-9531; revdjohns@hotmail.com.

Richmond, Richmond Presbyterian; Interim Moderator Rev. Bruce Dayton, 705-5050 Halifax St., Burnaby, BC V5B 2N5; 604-277-5410; dbd99dbd@gmail.com; for full details on the position, application and our church/congregation/community please visit the congregational profile link at www.richpres.com/wp/rpc-congregational-profile.

Victoria, St. Andrew's; Full-time senior minister; Interim Moderator Dr. Laura Kavanagh; 250-415-8173; ltkknox@telus.net.

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obituaries

Cronsberry, Ivan Frederick, November 9, 1927-February 13, 2015. Ivan had been an elder of the Presbyterian Church since 1953 and was an elder in Wychwood, Toronto, St. Andrew's, Aurora, and Knox, Victoria, where he served as clerk of session since 1989 and as representative elder to the Vancouver Island presbytery. He was elected the first lay moderator in the Synod of B.C. in the Presbytery of Vancouver Island and served from January 25, 1994 to September 1995.

Ivan married Laura in 1974 and in 2000 they moved to Courtenay, B.C., where they transferred their membership to Comox Valley Presbyterian Church. They enjoyed a marriage of 40 years.

Ivan is survived by his wife; cousin Richard Corner and his family in Lindsay, Ont.; cousin Bonnie Oxtoby Holt and her family in London, Ont.; dear friend of 60 years Don Wilson; along with many friends and church family members both on the Island and across the country who have walked the walk of faith with both him and Laura. Well done, good and faithful servant.

Gardner, Kenneth E., August 5, 1928-December 25, 2014. It's with sadness that we note the passing of Ken Gardner, longtime member of Fort St. John Presbyterian Church. Ken, his wife Dorothy and their growing family began attending the church in the early 1950s. In 1957 he became an elder and was still active in that capacity until his death. There was seldom a Sunday morning that you didn't see Ken at the sanctuary entrance handing out bulletins and greeting worshippers. Mr. Gardner carried out his duties faithfully and was an example of steadfast loyalty to the congregation. Thank you, Ken. We're going to miss you. God bless.

Neal, Dorothy, In the loving arms of our Lord, Dorothy Eliza Isabella (née Taylor) passed away on January 23, 2015. Predeceased by her loving husband, Allan Neal; cherished mother of Bonnie, Bill, Janet and Laurie; adored grandmother and great-grandmother.

Dorothy was a R.N. graduate from Victoria Hospital in London. She was an elder at Laurel Lea St. Matthew's Church, Sarnia, past provincial board director of the W.I., past president of Hamilton and London Synodical W.M.S., active in Sarnia Presbyterial and was a nurse for years at Camp Kintail.

A service was led by Rev. Janine Dekker at Laurel Lea St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church. Dorothy's loving Christian spirit will remain with all who knew and loved her.

FOR THE JOURNEY

A Most Fitting Epitaph

Thoughts on retirement. By David Webber

In Wayne Johnston's novel *The Custodian of Paradise*, on the gravestone of a minister and fisherman of a remote island off the southern coast of Newfoundland, there is an epitaph: "Here lies Samuel Loreburn, a good man with many faults who failed his people and his God as all men must."

As I begin the first month of the end of my full-time active mission work in the Presbyterian Church in Canada, I think it would be a most fitting epitaph for me. Not that I am feeling particularity dead or morose or even maudlin. In fact, retirement for me has been and still is much anticipated. With my wife, children, grandchildren and dogs, not to mention my many hobbies which I have neglected far too much over the past 32 years of ministry, retirement holds incredible possibilities.

Whatever else it is though, retirement is a kind of watershed. Watersheds are places that evoke reflection. And as I reflect over the past 32 years in full-time ministry in the church, I certainly remember the apparent successes. But perhaps more than anything else, what strikes me most are the failures. I could actually list most of them I think, or at least those that I became aware of as I lived them. There are some that have never shown up on my radar I am sure, but not too many, self-awareness not being something that I am usually too short of. I am not going to make a comprehensive list of my failures here, short of saying that though most relate to the time I have been in full-time ministry, they involve not just ministry but every aspect of my life and those I share life with. What I do want to do is reflect on why the failures occurred and what I can do with the awareness of them.

So why did they occur? Most of them occurred when what was on my mind was doing something good. What I mean by this is that I didn't deliberately set out to do something that would fail. And in the case of failures that occurred as the result of not doing something, I didn't choose to not do something so that I would fail. Rather, the failures often seemed to sneak up on me. I remember one example in particular.

I was a young minister and had been called out to the hospital to tend to a young woman in her early 20s who had been suffering with a serious chronic illness for some time. Though I did not know her or her situation very well, I did know her mom quite well from church. And so, fuelled with a great amount of concern and angst I set out for the large hospital in a neighbouring city.

I arrived in a rush, ascended to the room in a flap and entered with a flurry and as much professionalism as I could muster. Her mom was holding her hand and several dear friends were gathered around her. I greeted her mom and introduced myself to everyone else. I was simply told that she had asked for me to come and pray ›

ILLUSTRATION: BARRY FALLS

with her. By this time she appeared to be only semiconscious and so I immediately knelt by her bed, took her hand and began to pray for her healing.

The result was immediate and shocking. Though she couldn't talk and she wasn't really conscious she immediately began to moan loudly and throw herself from side to side in the bed in a great amount of agitation. Her mom exclaimed, "Oh no! Don't pray for that. She has lingered with her disease these long hard years. She is dying now. She doesn't want you to pray for her healing, she wants you to pray for her dying."

I knew better than that. I intended to do better than that. But then my own anxiety, pride and professionalism got involved.

What the Apostle would say is that my "flesh" got involved or "the sin that dwells within me" took over (Romans 7:14ff). Paul's point is that as good as I want to be, as good as I may be, there is always another reality that I have to contend with. Embedded in my human nature, comingled with the good that is there, there is also a propensity for sinning and for failing.

On one level this is the reason I need a Saviour. Paul says, "wretched man that I am who will rescue me from this reality" (Romans 7:24, my own paraphrase). His response to his own question is unequivocal and profound; "Jesus Christ." And for this rescuing, like Paul, I am left extremely humbled and thankful.

But on another level, this awareness of my human nature and its comingling of good and sin and failing gives me a queer kind of encouragement for venturing forth and living boldly. If this comingling is a fact of life that I will always have to deal with, and if Jesus Christ has dealt with the negative consequence of my sin and failure on the cross, then I am liberated to live this life boldly for him, to try my best for the good and for the kingdom. And if I fail, I know I am forgiven and I can pick up and try again. Trying for good and sometimes failing goes with being human. As I stand on the watershed of retirement and reflect, I find great hope and inspiration in this.

Martin Luther demonstrated this principle as he wrote to a perhaps too timid, young Philip Melanchthon: "If you are a preacher of Grace, then preach a true, not a fictitious grace; if grace is true, you must bear a true and not a fictitious sin. God does not save people who are only fictitious sinners. Be a sinner and sin boldly, but believe and rejoice in Christ even more boldly. ... Pray boldly—you too are a mighty sinner."

Sin boldly? What a most instructive paradox. Luther is not calling on Melanchthon to deliberately sin but to live for Christ and to live and serve Christ knowing that he will, in the process, sometimes sin and fail miserably. But in serving Christ, let that reality and the fear of it not get in the way of picking up and trying again, with boldness.

That's how I think I want to go forward into life and into retirement. And with Paul: Thanks be to God for the forgiveness of the resurrected Christ.

Rev. David Webber is newly retired from the Cariboo Presbyterian Church, B.C. His fourth book, When the Aspen Flowers: Blooming in the Creator's Garden *can be ordered through webberink@telus.net.*

"It happens to all of us ... God simply keeps reaching down into the dirt of humanity and resurrecting us from the graves we dig for ourselves through our violence, our lies, our selfishness, our arrogance, and our addictions. And God keeps loving us back to life over and over."

—NADIA BOLZ-WEBER

iSTOCK

There are times that we aren't convinced we have what it takes to undertake a task. We might question our gifting, our ability; or we might think that someone else—maybe anyone else—would be better suited to the job. When that happens, let me encourage you to step back from the situation for a few moments, and prayerfully consider whether God has drawn you, maybe even called you to the task. And if God has called you to it, you can be sure God will give you the requisite tools to accomplish it.

—JEFF LOACH, PASSIONATELY HIS

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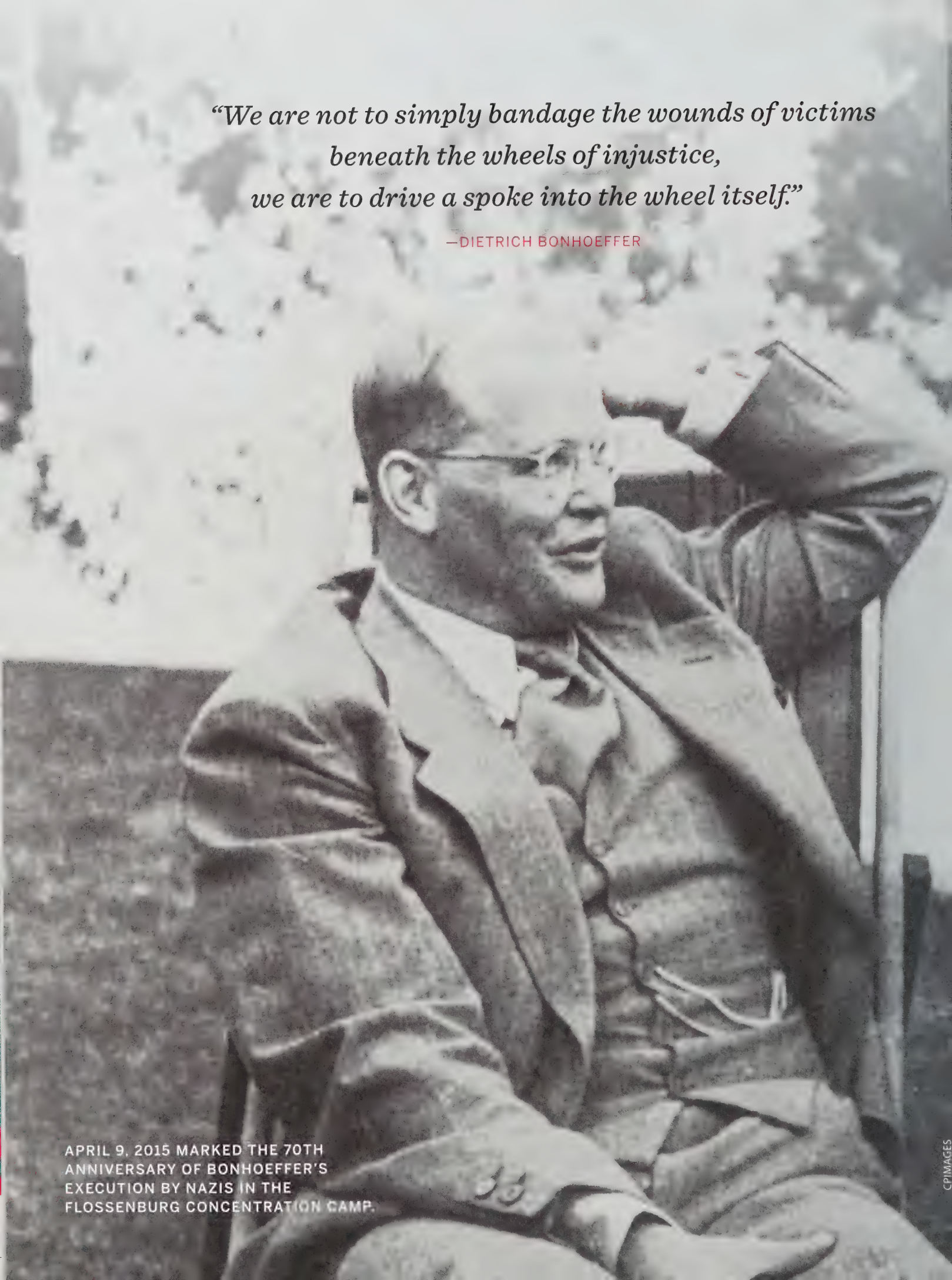

"We are not to simply bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself."

—DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

APRIL 9, 2015 MARKED THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF BONHOEFFER'S EXECUTION BY NAZIS IN THE FLOSSENBURG CONCENTRATION CAMP.

CPIMAGES

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Emma Hanquist/Anna Goodson

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FOR THE RECORD

Embracing Spirituality

Mainline churches need to turn to Mary now as they once turned to Martha. By David Harris

"Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law ..."

So opens the Constitution Act of 1982. And while the understanding of God is vague, it is clear that our laws are largely built on Judeo-Christian principles of care and compassion, concern for the poor and a responsibility to look after creation.

Mainline Christians can take a certain pride that their Martha-like efforts to create a better country for everyone have been largely successful.

The evidence of success can be measured in part by the adoption today of our faith principles by Canadians of all or no beliefs.

A recent Angus Reid survey of attitudes toward religion and faith reveals a broad correlation on many social issues between the views of mainline Christians and those who are either ambivalent about religion or reject it altogether.

Along with helping to establish the very rule of law itself, as well as the other non-religious social institutions we take for granted, we can say that Christians in the past were great Marthas.

But here's the rub. Today, as the Angus Reid poll observes: "Canadians are more likely to self-identify as spiritual rather than religious by a margin approaching two-to-one."

There's more: Of the 44 per cent of the population that is ambivalent about religion, 42 per cent say they are open to greater involvement with religious groups. Forty per cent of them pray on a regular basis; and 64 per cent said they believe in a God who cares about them personally.

'Canadians are more likely to self-identify as spiritual rather than religious by a margin approaching two-to-one'

Perhaps the most positive statistic from a missional perspective is that almost 90 per cent of them continue to identify with a religious tradition.

That suggests there is a large untapped market for the church to reach out to, not by inviting them to be Marthas but to become Marys.

The evidence suggests these people would be more likely to respond to well-crafted spiritual formation programs that would help them deepen their relationship with God.

Here's the other thing. As *Maclean's* magazine reported in April, an American scholar has shown that "an intensely felt, transcendental sense of a relationship with God" is "more protective than any other factor against the big three adolescent dangers.

"Spiritually connected teens are ... 60 per cent less likely to suffer from depression than adolescents who are not spiritually oriented." They are also "40 per cent less likely to abuse alcohol or other substances, and 80 per cent less likely to engage in unprotected sex. Spiritually oriented children, raised to not shy from hard questions or difficult situations ... also tend to excel academically."

One final note: The Angus Reid survey (conducted in association with Alberta sociologist Reginald Bibby) also puts a final nail in the coffin of the idea that "liberal" trends, primarily in the area of sexuality, were and are responsible for the decline of mainline Protestant and Anglican denominational numbers.

This survey shows clearly that Roman Catholics and Evangelical Christians have been the beneficiaries of immigration over the past decade or so, the way mainline churches were in previous decades.

A major revival is not necessarily in the offing, but concrete possibilities exist. It remains to be seen who will grasp them.

David Harris is the Record's *publisher and editor.*

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Letters

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An Amazing Teacher

Re 10 Things to Improve Your (Young) Kids' Lives Starting Now, Matthew Ruttan, Online

I wish you had been my minister years ago; perhaps I could have skipped some horrible errors in my life. Ok I know, it is those errors that brought me to the feet of God, where I am today. A place where I am ready to learn, listen and heal. A slow learner but a learner nonetheless!

BRENDA FAVA, ONLINE COMMENT

Such a Good Poem

Re Penetanguishine, March

What I love about good poetry is the onion effect. The more you work with it, the more layers you find and savour and appreciate. This is such a good poem.

DONNA DRAPKIN, ONLINE COMMENT

The Last Word, for Now

Editor's Note:

So many have so much to say about the overture to General Assembly regarding human sexuality. These letters are the last word, for now, on the subject. We will await the outcome in Vancouver, report the facts and share a taste of the debate, but we will hold readers' letters for awhile. These letters are all heavily excerpted; the full versions are available online.

In 1994, the church adopted a report on this subject that was based on extensive biblical study and framed in gracious pastoral terms. In the current debate, I have not seen any serious attempts to refute the arguments presented in that wise and careful report, nor even any real efforts to defend the revisionist views we heard so much of a generation ago. The 1994 report has not been answered; it has simply been ignored.

JOHN P. VAUDRY, PEMBROKE, ONT.

The *Record* has spent a lot of time explaining the fine art of conversation to us. This is what I have gleaned so far. First, shame your opponent; impugn ›

LETTERS, continued

their character by referring to them as "slow learners," or "self-fulfilled." If that doesn't work, attack your opponent by referring to them as bad actors or even "terrorists." Then, accuse them of using different Bibles. (How do we choose with so many versions and pseudo-versions out there?) These questions certainly cause one to yearn for the Book of Forms, where one is constrained to stick to the topic of the motion, instead of emotion. Our Moderator did call for a fair fight.

I think the *Record* can do better, don't you?

CLARENCE SNIEDER, BRAMPTON, ONT.

Coming as I do, from the other side of this critical issue, I do agree with my brother in Christ (Kevin Livingston, March issue) in valuing highly the unity of the church. As the church of Christ has made its way in the world over two millennia there have been two major moments and many minor moments when faithful members have seen fit to part ways in their communion. Today, however, we find ourselves in a time when Christian churches are fighting for their very survival, because of persecution in places like the Middle East, or disparagement and apathy in the West, such that a struggle for unity calls for as much excellence in effort as seeking clarity in our doctrine.

NICK ATHANASIADIS, TORONTO

With the Bible as our primary rule for faith and life, it will be a difficult path for those who believe in the full humanity of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons. That trajectory runs against pertinent scripture.

In a previous age, it was also a difficult journey for those who believed in the full humanity of black persons. That project was also against chief scripture.

Hard as it is for those of us in the Reformed tradition to see, like the Sabbath and the papacy—the Bible was created for humans, not the other way around.

ELDON HAY, SACKVILLE, N.B.

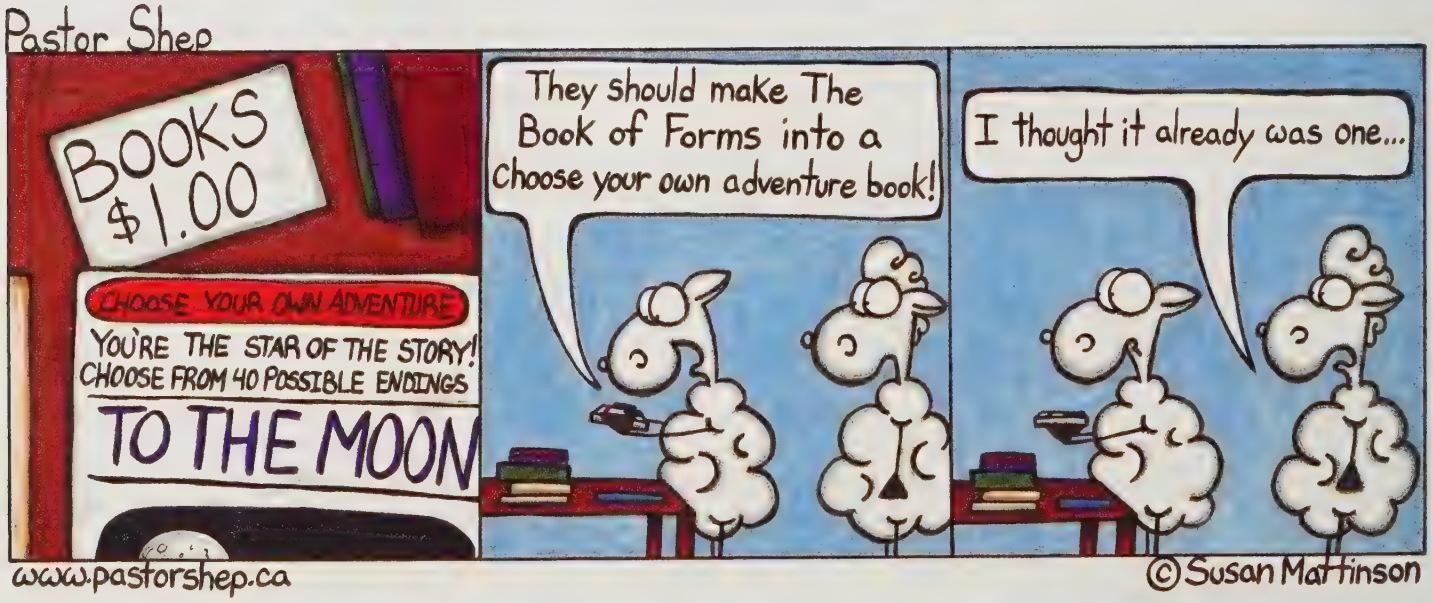
From a 1998 article published in A New Network, *a newsletter within the PCC:*

Those who oppose reinterpreting the word of the Lord—especially as it concerns sexual relationships—need to be reminded that a priest may not marry a divorcée (Leviticus 21:7, 13), and that if his daughter becomes a prostitute, she is to be burned to death (verse 9). If we are going to be selective about the moral code of Leviticus let us uniformly err on the side of grace; as we also manage to do in our reinterpretation of Christ's prohibition on the remarriage of divorced persons (Matthew 5:32).

WILLARD POTTINGER, HAMILTON, ONT.

"Despite protestations to the contrary, discussion on the forthcoming LGBT overtures cannot be resolved by only quoting the Bible. If, however, the Bible is clear on any issue that the church deliberates upon this present day, then it is not on the specifics but simply this: seek guidance from God. In a manner similar to the Israelites in the wilderness, the LGBT overtures at this upcoming General Assembly invite us on our journey to pause, reflect, and seek God in conversation and prayer."

PHILIP YOO, VIA EMAIL



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Destined to Die

Re You Have Been Saved, April

Growing up in Carleton Place, Ont., I knew a family who believed that "they were destined to die, because it was written in the book with a particular time and date." My grandmother thought they were pretty odd.

The area was settled by Scots Presbyterians, and the Cameronian sect still has a "reformed Presbyterian church" in Almonte, which, like the Wee Free's (the Free Church of Scotland) is fundamentalist.

PETER IVESON, TORONTO

Freedom to Express

Re Letters, Caught in a System, April

Free speech as a right is a funny thing. On paper it is, but what does it really mean? Is there really free speech if deviation from the accepted opinion is not tolerated and can be met with organized attempts to force you to be quiet or suffer legal or extra-legal consequences?

Between Paris, and a pizza place in Indiana (where owners were targeted for an unpopular opinion) that was threatened with burning, it seems that free speech is only free if one has a plan to protect one's self from harm if anyone hears you speak.

Modern free speech means the freedom to express opinions that you are socially allowed to have.

TRENT COLLICUTT, ONLINE COMMENT

Take a Course of Action

Re Sovereign Grace, February

A Christian is a member of the body of Christ; or a disciple who follows the example of Jesus. We should look to Jesus to know the nature of God. However, our image or understanding of Jesus is often a bit laundered. We have made Jesus more comforting and less challenging, often with the help of church words. Jesus adulation is a regular feature of Sunday worship, delivered as a sandwich without the crust. The crust is that a Christian is constrained to follow the example of Jesus. This cannot be done without taking up the cross or taking courses of action that will have some considerable expense to the self.

ANDREW MITCHELL, ONLINE COMMENT

Be sure to read the longer, unedited versions of your letters on our website, and join the conversation! You can also follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/presbyterianrecord.

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POP CHRISTIANITY

A Tree in the City

The forest has been replaced by us. By Andrew Faiz

I live in the old part of the city, at the edge of a large park. The oldest houses here were built in the late 1800s; my house is about 100 years old. Take a look at this neighbourhood from the sky and what you see is a lot of green. One of the charms of this neighbourhood is the old trees. There are three of them on my property. A sugar maple which an arborist estimated at nearly 200 years of age; a black walnut around 100 years and an oak a quarter century older than that. There's also a crab apple tree about 20 or more years old, with its branches twisting at odd angles directly in front of the house.

There are trees like these on almost every property on my block. Century-old maples and oaks. Beautiful, majestic, a chore when the leaves fall, aggravating when the sap flows. Dangerous during ice storms. A limb from our maple fell on one of our cars; not a scratch on the car—just the way the branch twisted and fell onto the roof rack—but it did take out the power lines, and two of our neighbours were without power for a couple of days. A heavy branch from a neighbour's maple crushed a car. Then another branch from that same tree fell. Another neighbour's tree smashed a garage.

Trees grow old. A maple can live to four centuries, but not in the city. They can't shed and regenerate where we live. A 10-foot portion, about a foot thick, of a neighbour's maple fell in the middle of the day, onto my walkway, feet from the sidewalk, about 10 feet from where somebody was raking leaves on my property. He never heard that tree crack; there was no warning. That limb could have killed him.

The forest has been replaced by roads and driveways. It's not the fault of the trees that they are potential dangers; nor is it our fault that we live where they were born

A couple more incidents like that and the tree had to go. The tree that crushed a car is being removed as I write this.

The only sin these trees have committed is to grow old. They were born before there was a neighbourhood. The original developers must have removed a forest of trees; left one or two standing per lot. Then came the houses, the people, the possessions. That black walnut in the backyard extends over my neighbour's backyard where several cars are parked. One hundred-year storm (and we've had a few of them over the past decade) and it could wipe out tens of thousands of dollars, knock out power or cable or even a portion of the house.

It's a beautiful tree that adds to the beauty of our backyard. But it's only a matter of time; 10 years, five, 20. Also, the maple. Two of its buddies have already been removed by the city over the past year. A matter of time.

In the forest, trees shed, renew life. There is no person there to rake away their seed, their regeneration. In the city they are an aesthetic presence only. (Oh sure, yeah, they are the city's lungs, but that is trumped by the danger they pose in their ageing to children.)

The landscape has shifted under those trees. The forest has been replaced by roads and driveways. It's not the fault of the trees that they are potential dangers; nor is it our fault that we live where they were born. That's just the way things are. That's all. Town and country are locked in a symbiotic relationship and like all such relationships one partner is the host, one is the parasite. Which is which on any given day changes.

Andrew Faiz is the Record's *senior editor.*

BULLETIN

Community and World News

PHOTO BY PETER ROMBEEK

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Karen Horst Named Sole Nominee for Moderator

General Assembly begins June 4 in Vancouver.

By Connie Wardle

On April 1 votes from presbyteries were tallied and Rev. Karen Horst was named sole nominee for moderator of the 2015 General Assembly.

"There were such great candidates on the slate; so I think it was a challenging year for decision making because so many people are so gifted, and gifted in different ways," she said shortly after the announcement. "I think feeling humbled is the overwhelming experience right now. And excited as well in terms of the possibilities for the future of the church."

Horst serves as minister at St. Andrew's, Orillia, Ont. She has been a part of many national committees including Presbyterian World Service & Development, International Affairs, and the Life and Mission Agency. She has also penned an assortment of Christian education materials and worked on design teams for national and international events.

Having come to the ministry of word and sacraments from diaconal ministry, Horst said she has a great passion for specialized ministries in the church and hopes to raise up the importance of those ministries and ministers during her year as moderator.

"I'm actually quite hopeful for the church," she told the *Record*. "I know there's lots of conversation about decline and I think the church is going through a transition, no doubt about that. But I think sometimes God has a way of working through that revisioning and reshaping."

This year's General Assembly will deal with several overtures from lower courts asking for the denomination to change its traditional stance on human sexuality.

When it comes to controversy, Horst said, the key is to "be sensitive to the leading of the Spirit."

"People are quite anxious but I think we have all kinds of evidence of how God has spoken through the church and the collective and corporate voice in previous difficult challenges and I think that will be true for this one as well," she said. "The critical piece will be that we're respectful of one another, that ›

GENERAL ASSEMBLY, continued

we carefully listen to one another to understand why people conclude what they do, and understand that we all have a great love and passion for the Bible. But sometimes these issues boil down to challenges in hermeneutics as much as they do to ethics. So I think as long as we're able to come depending on God rather than just on our own opinions, then I think God will help us to navigate all that."

Horst will be the fifth woman to moderate a General Assembly, and the second person in her immediate family to do so. Her husband, Rick Horst, moderated the 2011 Assembly.

"I'm sure people will get lots of mileage out of that," she said with a laugh.

Horst is expected to be installed on June 4 when General Assembly convenes at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver.

Connie Wardle is the Record*'s senior writer.*

ASSEMBLY COUNCIL BUSINESS IN BRIEF

At its March meeting, the Assembly Council agreed to continue working on a strategic plan for the denomination for at least another year and to deliver an interim report to this year's General Assembly.

- Donations from congregations to Presbyterians Sharing, the denomination's primary mission and ministry fund, fell about $200,000 short of the $7.5 million expected in 2014. Accordingly, the 2015 budget for congregational allocations has been revised from $7.5 million to $7.3 million.
- The council endorsed a recommendation to create a budget working group to "consult broadly, interact with the strategic planning process, and prepare a budget for 2018 that will allow for a sustainable budget going forward." Although there is "no crisis of cash," the finance committee said in its report, the "church cannot maintain the operating budget at the current levels indefinitely. Expenditures will be out of sync with income over the long term."
- The church's chief financial officer, Stephen Roche, announced that he intends to retire Jan. 31, 2017. He, the general secretary of the Life and Mission Agency and the principal clerk of the General Assembly will be non-voting members of the 2018 budget working group.
- The church's consolidated portfolio generated a return of 12.8 per cent last year, which Roche declared to be excellent for a conservatively invested fund.
- The Women's Missionary Society, which is faced with declining membership and income, is continuing to reduce its yearly contribution to the church's operating funds. In 2015, it will provide $150,000—less than half of the $350,000 it provided in previous years. The contribution will reduce again to $100,000 in 2016 and to $50,000 in 2017.
- The Life and Mission Agency has approved the merger of its Stewardship and Planned Giving departments effective Sept. 1.
- The Pension and Benefits Board will ask the General Assembly to create a special committee to work on a plan to deal with the solvency deficit in the church's pension fund in the event interest rates remain low over the next few years. Although the council supported the board's recommendation, the special committee will need to be struck by the General Assembly when it meets in June.
- The council will also present a series of recommendations to General Assembly aimed at reducing the number of members on the council and changing the way they are appointed. The plan calls for a gradual transition from the current model of predominantly regional representation to a council made up of members-at-large who are appointed for the particular skills and expertise they bring to the group,with diversity and region taken into consideration. —*CW*

PWS&D RESPONDING IN VANUATU

In the wake of Cyclone Pam, the severe tropical storm that devastated the archipelago of Vanuatu in March, Presbyterian World Service & Development has provided an initial $10,000 in aid, which was deployed in partnership with the Adventist Development and Relief Agency and Global Medics.

The initial relief measures include distributing hygiene kits, water purification systems and food aid as well as latrines and generators for evacuation centres.

"It was clear from the outset that people would need access to clean water as most of their water sources had been contaminated," said Guy Smagghe, PWS&D's senior program coordinator. "It was also immediately clear that Vanuatu would not have sufficient household water treatment systems available locally."

A month after the cyclone, access to food and safe water remain sources of concern. More than 90 per cent of the crops in Vanuatu were destroyed, a devastating blow to a population that relies heavily on subsistence farming. According to the UN, the country faces at least another month without locally grown food since the first harvest from fast-growing crops is likely to be in mid-June.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada has an historic connection to the South Pacific nation. Rev. John Geddie, a Scottish-born minister who served in Prince Edward Island, established a mission in southern Vanuatu (then known as the New Hebrides) in 1848 under the auspices of what was then the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia.

James Astleford, ADRA director, Guy Smagghe, PWS&D senior program coordinator, and a Global Medics volunteer pose with water purification and hygiene kits.

An additional $5,200 had been donated by Presbyterians for Vanuatu relief as of April 14. For more on PWS&D's response, visit presbyterian.ca/pwsd. —*CW*

PHOTO COURTESY OF ADRA CANADA

Pastoral Care Resource

If you or your church is aiming to offer pastoral care training, you might want to check out an extensive new manual by Janet Stark.

Stark is spiritual care manager and chaplain at Brockville General Hospital and lay minister at St. Paul's, Kemptville, Ont.

Her 570-page resource is designed to be used by members of any denomination and is based on the "Good Samaritan principle," she said. "Spiritual care means nurturing the spirit and we're using all Christian ethics and principles to train people to provide that care."

She said trainers could pick and choose which sections would be most useful to them in their context. In addition to the manual, which is available as a free download, trainers can purchase a CD containing 16 PowerPoint presentations and 10 suggested lesson plans for $25. Visit stpaulskemptville.ca for more details. —*CW*

Ewart Fund Receives No Applications for 2015

The Ewart Endowment Fund has received no applications for grants in 2015 and the deadline has been extended to Sept. 30, the subcommittee reported in March.

The fund provides yearly grants for events and programs that provide Christian education opportunities or support.

In 2014, it provided a total of $187,000 to six new projects and five previously approved multi-year projects. These included summer programs, national events, support for recent seminary graduates and lay education programs. About $47,000 is available for new projects this year.

"Sometimes people are very inventive, get good ideas going," said Brent Ellis, who was convener of the subcommittee responsible for the fund.

A list of funds and application forms can be found at presbyterian.ca/fund-applications. —*CW*

ANNIVERSARY

A Place Apart

Crieff Hills Community 'brings us back in touch with our roots.' By Amy MacLachlan

When Col. J.B. Maclean left 250 acres to the Presbyterian Church in Canada back in 1950, one of the stipulations he included in his will was that it be maintained and developed "as a model and example to other communities."

"We're very conscious of what Col. Maclean probably had on his mind and his agricultural and environmentally-friendly ideas," said Lawrence Pentelow, who has been director of Crieff Hills Community Retreat and Conference Centre for the last 14 years. "So in the last five, six, or even eight years, we've increasingly taken seriously that the idea of community has a great deal to do with the land because it brings us back in touch with our roots."

This year marks a special event in the centre's ongoing history, as Crieff Hills celebrates its 40th anniversary. To connect even more to its agricultural roots, Crieff is increasingly focusing on environmental stewardship. The property, nestled among rolling hills less than an hour northwest of Toronto, is a mix of forests, fields and developed grounds. Dedicated employees have created a bluebird nesting box trail, a butterfly garden and shrub area to host endangered butterflies and caterpillars, and taken on heritage fruit tree cultivation, forestry projects, and bee keeping that enables honey production and sales. Meals served in the Maclean Hall dining room feature fresh vegetables grown in the gardens as well as local produce and seasonal items.

Maclean kept the property as his country getaway, and it was a working farm going back to the 1800s. Today, the retreat centre offers spaces for meetings, lodge-type buildings for overnight groups, historic houses for things like retreats or large family getaways, and individual suites and drop-in space in the Pines, a building added in 2011. There are also miles of trails for hikes, a labyrinth for spiritual contemplation, and special events that highlight everything from nature to theology.

"The parables of Jesus come alive in this setting," said Rev. Bob Geddes, chair of the Maclean Estate Committee, which handles the overall operations of the facility. "Just walking around out here, you can start to connect to some of those parables. You see the fields in action and how they change over the year."

The centre is a self-sustaining ministry, relying solely on donations, profits from visitors and funds from the estate. A major project for the near future is increasing the accessibility of the conference hall.

Crieff is billed as "a place apart," and the committee strives to strike a balance between planned programming and big events, and self-guided individual or group activities.

"Historically, conference centres have selected plans and events and pushed them out to the population," said Pentelow, "but our approach is primarily to draw people in and provide them with the opportunity to experience faith development."

It's a low-profile way to operate, as Pentelow may not receive feedback from visitors who come to Crieff for a personal or spiritual time, rather than an organized event.

"Our ministry is hospitality," he continued. "It comes back to acting below the radar; we don't always know the impact we're having but in faith we know we are."

A 40th anniversary celebration will be held on Sept 27. Visit crieffhills.com for a full event listing.

Amy MacLachlan is the Record's *managing editor.*

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Faith

Deepening your relationship with God

ISTOCK

LEADERSHIFT

Kingdom Acres

'Show home' ecclesiology.

By Ross Lockhart

Years ago, I preached regularly at a little church north of Toronto around Canada's Wonderland. At the time, farmers' fields that once surrounded the theme park were being transformed into cookie-cutter subdivisions. From Highway 400, motorists glimpsed large advertisements of this future community. The signs, complete with architect's drawings of families playing on quiet cul-de-sacs, were a stark contrast to the muddy fields beside the highway betraying how much work still had to take place in order to bring this future to life. The only other hint of the new life to come was found in the corner of the development—a model home. On my way to a church meeting ›

LEADERSHIFT, continued

one day, I pulled off the highway and went inside that show home. Taking my muddy boots off at the door, I entered a totally different reality than the fallow fields outside the temporary sales home. A company representative warmly greeted me and offered a short tour complete with sparkling stainless steel appliances and an invitation to sit by the gas fireplace in a spacious living room. As I sank into a ridiculously plush leather couch my eye was drawn to a nearby window and the muddy, uncultivated field beyond. As if reading my mind, the sales representative said, "It's a little hard to picture how all of this will one day be different but hopefully this glimpse is enough to tease your imagination."

That line was still ringing in my head a few minutes later when I pulled into the gravel church parking lot. I wondered whether our congregations might just be show homes of God's future development plans we call the Kingdom of God. Could it be that when people enter our churches they catch just a glimpse of what God in Christ is doing to redeem the world? What if the way we treated each other as sisters and brothers in Christ was so different than the world outside that people were curious enough to want to find out more about who Jesus is for us ... for them? If our show homes were patterned appropriately to give even just a glimpse of God's plan for this world and mirrored just enough of that self-giving, mutual, selfless love we know in Father, Son and Holy Spirit, how might that change a sin-sick and cynical world?

I raise the question and offer the image of the church as God's show home for the Kingdom of God in this Leadership column aware of the anxiety that's brewing about the upcoming General Assembly. We are so excited in Vancouver to welcome brothers and sisters in Christ from across the country. We're especially pleased that commissioners will be in our St. Andrew's Hall neighbourhood of the University of British Columbia. But I am also aware that there are debates and discussions coming that will be a test of our ability to listen to, and love, one another. The thing is—like people watching Jesus eat at the table of sinners—others will be watching and wondering how the Presbyterian Church family will treat one another.

Imagine how powerful our church's witness to the gospel could be if we offer the wider world a "show home" model of how followers of Jesus Christ can pray, talk and discern God's will together with gentleness and respect. What leadership that would be for Christ's global church to embrace St. Augustine's classic statement that on "Essentials: Unity. Non-essentials: Liberty. All things: Charity."

A large sign proclaimed the future development but the farmers' fields behind declared a different reality. I passed the little show home each week on the way to church. When you entered that show home, with its sparkling floors and upgraded appliances, you got a glimpse of what was promised in the future subdivision. I wonder, can each and every congregation be a show home for the Kingdom of God? In a healthy church community, might we model what it means to participate in the mutual, self-giving love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit? Might the church be the place where people measure their effectiveness based on the quality of our relationships, the depth of our compassion and the trustworthiness of our grace-filled actions? Ministry may be like sand through the fingertips but at the end of the day our congregational "metrics of grace" can point to the muddy, uncultivated fields of the world and offer a glimpse of the kingdom that is coming ... the kingdom that is already breaking into our lives.

In a healthy church community, might we model what it means to participate in the mutual, self-giving love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit? Might the church be the place where people measure their effectiveness based on the quality of our relationships, the depth of our compassion and the trustworthiness of our grace-filled actions?

Rev. Dr. Ross Lockhart is director of ministry leadership and education at St. Andrew's Hall, Vancouver.

ISTOCK

PROGRESSIVE LECTIONARY

Wow!

Walk with Peter on a journey of discovery. By Laurence DeWolfe

Sixth Sunday of Easter
May 10, 2015
Acts 10:44-48; 1 John 5:1-6

Peter must have had sore eyes and an aching jaw from all the revelations he had received in just a short span of time. It started a few days before, as Peter "went here and there among the believers" (Acts 9:32). Peter spoke the name of Jesus and a paralyzed man got up! He heard a woman named Tabitha had died. He went and spoke to her, and up she got! Wow!

Peter prayed on a rooftop while his friends downstairs made his lunch. He saw a gigantic picnic blanket coming down from the sky. Every living creature, clean and unclean, was served up right behind Peter's eyes. A Voice told him to "rise, kill, and eat." Peter was afraid to choose the wrong food. The Voice replied, "What God has made clean you must not call profane." Wow! (10:9-16)

As Peter tried to process this vision, he was surprised again. Strangers came, Gentiles, messengers from a Roman officer. Peter must come at once, to Cornelius' unclean Gentile home! Peter went and heard how Peter's God had given Cornelius specific instructions about Peter! (10:17-33) God was at work where Peter had always believed God could not be! Wow!

Peter found his voice, cleared his throat, and said something that would change the church forever and for good. "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to God!" (10:34-35) The penny dropped. He remembered the picnic blanket. Wow! Peter preached a short sermon and a mini-Pentecost exploded, right there, in Cornelius' house! Wow!

We have to tell the whole story to get the "Wow!" in our short reading. Baptism, derived from the ritual of Jesus' people, was available to anyone. It no longer mattered what tradition, or any reading of Torah, said about who was an insider and who was an outsider. Wow!

Ever had a Peter moment? Ever found God where God was not supposed to be? Have you ever seen God's Spirit working through someone you thought was ›

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unworthy, unclean? Ever reached for your Bible, sure you know where to find the word that proves you right, when right before your eyes is proof you're wrong?

Once upon a time I believed women should not lead in the church. Then I fell, hard. All my pretences collapsed. Women friends stayed with me, were pastors to me, demonstrated true leadership. They helped me find my way back to my vocation.

Once upon a time I believed that people who didn't believe and live just as I did couldn't be true Christians. Then I shared study, worship, and home with brothers and sisters in Christ who were different from me in many ways. Fellow preachers of the same gospel. Together we learned, laughed, cried, and cared. I discovered the Spirit was with us all.

Once upon a time I believed Roman Catholics were unenlightened, less-than Christian, needing Reformation. Once upon a time I thought our First Nations neighbours could only be Christians if they thought, prayed, and worshipped as I do. Once upon a time I knew no Jews, no Muslims, no atheists. So I could go on believing God wasn't with them at all.

Peter's conversion didn't really stick. Maybe because it all happened so fast. It's a good thing Jesus was working on Paul over in Damascus while the Spirit worked on Peter in Joppa and Caesarea! Peter lived most of his life as he had been taught to live, believe, and act toward others. Most of his life he lived among his own people, Jews or first-generation Jewish Christians. It's easy to hold on to our beliefs about the world and people in it when we don't engage much of the world or many of the people in it.

Rev. Dr. Laurence DeWolfe teaches at Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax.

ISTOCK

RENEWAL

Wonderful Diversity

Differing opinions make us richer. By Fred Stewart

"There is so little room for genuine give-and-take in our Presbyterian discussions these days, while at the same time so much hangs on how our conversations go. The issues that we are discussing are not simply topics about which we happen to disagree. They are matters that are vitally connected to the question of whether we can stay together as a denomination. In that sense, our present Presbyterian debates do not feel like friendly arguments over the breakfast table, or even the more heated kinds of exchanges that might take place in the presence of a marriage counselor."

The issue referred to is the place of same-sex marriage and non-celibate LGBT ordination in the polity and practice of the church. ›

RENEWAL, continued

These are not my words but rather those of Richard J. Mouw, former president of Fuller Theological Seminary, in a 2004 article in *Sojourners* magazine as he surveyed the denominational situation in the PC(USA). His article was titled "Why the Evangelical Church Needs the Liberal Church." He clearly writes from an evangelical perspective but does so in a humble and forthright manner that I found winsome.

His good friend Barbara Wheeler, then-president of Austin Theological Seminary, wrote a parallel article titled "Why the Liberal Church needs the Evangelical Church." She clearly comes to the matter at hand from a liberal point of view.

I commend both articles to all of you. I am pretty sure that evangelicals like myself will not be convinced they are wrong. Neither will my liberal friends. What we might all be convinced of is that there is a greater issue at play here. Unless there is a change in some of the rhetoric and intractability Dr. Mouw describes in the opening quote and which I have witnessed in recent days on this side of the border, the casualty may be our Presbyterian "large tent" that provides a ministry and theological home to many liberals, many conservatives and many evangelicals. It has been the nature of our wonderful diversity for many generations.

Our denomination does not need congregations and presbyteries and ultimately our General Assemblies ground to a halt by countless cases, appeals and endless debates while the Titanic continues to sink

Post-Christian Canada does not need to see another messy church split. It is already convinced that we are irrelevant—both liberal and evangelical. Our denomination does not need congregations and presbyteries and ultimately our General Assemblies ground to a halt by countless cases, appeals and endless debates while the Titanic continues to sink.

Let me conclude with Dr. Mouw's closing comment:

"I want with all my heart for this to happen to us in the Presbyterian Church—that we take up our arguments about the issues that divide only after we have knelt and laid our individual and collective burdens of sin at the foot of the cross. Needless to say, if it did happen, I would be surprised. But then, the God whom we worship and serve is nothing if not a God of surprises."

To read both articles, visit:
sojo.net/magazine/2004/02/why-evangelical-church-needs-liberal-church

sojo.net/magazine/2004/02/why-liberal-church-needs-evangelical-church

Rev. Fred Stewart is executive director of the Renewal Fellowship, and minister at St. Andrew's, Bolsover, and Woodville Community Churches.

ISTOCK

ORDINARY RADICAL

Justice > Charity

Learning what it really means to 'do justice.' By Amy MacLachlan

The notion of social justice makes me think of last year's General Assembly, when Rev. Dr. Dale Woods, principal at Presbyterian College, Montreal, led commissioners through a short survey—a few questions to help them figure out their "spiritual style" and that of their congregations. (The *Record* featured an article about this in its November 2014 issue).

When the question period was complete, Dr. Woods asked commissioners to divide ›

ORDINARY RADICAL, continued

MAY'S CHALLENGE

Justice

The idea this month is to learn more about what causes injustice, and how we can work to help remedy injustices. Talk with people whose life work is dedicated to justice and righteousness, meet people who are victims of injustice and learn their stories, and investigate how you can start being part of the solution. Good luck! And be sure to follow my blog and share your thoughts with me.

themselves up in the room according to the style that best represented them. Two styles were most common: A "spirituality of the mind" where "the primary way of knowing God is through the use of the intellect. Here the goal is to understand things as opposed to changing them," and "personal renewal," concerned mostly with "personal spiritual experience, a personally meaningful walk with God, identity and intimacy with God, repentance, renewal, and a positive, constructive witness in the world."

The smallest group (and I mean small!) was the fourth, "social regeneration." This group is most concerned with "working toward a world that reflects the values inherent in the kingdom of God. Many of the prophets in the Bible would be part of this quadrant. It looks toward that time when God's vision for the world will be fulfilled." In short, social justice.

The fact that this group was the smallest made quite an impression on me. Simply put, I was disappointed.

Justice is something Jesus was especially concerned with. Justice for the poor, the oppressed, the widow and orphan. People who had few or no rights, who couldn't speak up for themselves.

And justice was a huge concern in the Old Testament. The psalmist reminds us that God "loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the loving kindness of the Lord" (Psalm 33:5).

One of the many books I'm currently enjoying is by Rachel Held Evans. Raised in a conservative, evangelical family, Evans now practices a more liberal, "radical" Christianity and writes about it on her blog. In *A Year of Biblical Womanhood,* she includes a chapter on justice. Here's something that stood out for me: "Judaism has no word for 'charity.' Instead, the Jews speak of *tzedakah,* which means 'justice' or 'righteousness.'

"While the word charity connotes a single act of giving, justice speaks to right living, of aligning oneself with the world in a way that sustains rather than exploits the rest of creation. Justice is not a gift; it's a lifestyle, a commitment to the Jewish concept of *tikkun olam*—'repairing the world.'"

Of course, our friend Shane Claiborne is so concerned about justice that he started a like-minded community in the middle of an impoverished Philadelphia neighbourhood where he lives, works and prays, helping and serving and befriending the people he meets there.

"A homeless mother once told us that there is a big difference between managing poverty and ending poverty," writes Claiborne in *The Irresistible Revolution.* "'Managing poverty is big business. Ending poverty is revolutionary.'"

I'm hoping that my visit to Evangel Hall in Toronto (a ministry of the PCC dedicated to helping the city's homeless) will introduce me to some people who are making a difference, as well as some of the people who live on the streets of Canada's largest city. I'm also hoping to chat with the Presbyterian Church's associate secretary of Justice Ministries, to help me learn more about what's needed to create lasting change, and how ordinary people like you and me can help make that happen. And also this month, I'm going to be visiting Rev. Joel Sherbino at Paris Presbyterian Church. The congregation is devoted to outreach and creating strong relationships within their community. The church has even started a soup-making business that employs local people in need. How cool is that?

Justice isn't just about giving money to a person on the street, or writing a cheque for an outreach project, or giving your old clothes to a charity. Those are all good and necessary things, but justice goes way beyond that.

"True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It comes to see that a system that produces beggars needs to be repaved," said Martin Luther King Jr., in a 1967 sermon entitled, A Time to Break the Silence, and referenced by Claiborne. "We are called to be the Good Samaritan, but after you lift so many people out of the ditch you start to ask, maybe the whole road to Jericho needs to be repaved."

Amy MacLachlan is the Record's *managing editor. Follow her blog at presbyterianrecord.ca.*

Life

Thoughts and inspiration for your daily life

ISTOCK

FAMILY

Love, Ask, Accept

Ten ways your congregation can help a family living with autism.

By Becky Roushorne-Lau

My son has autism. He is also a sweet, funny, delightful child who never ceases to amaze me. Last month, in honour of World Autism Awareness Day (April 2) I put together a list of things congregations can do that might help a family with autism feel more comfortable. I hope this will be a good starting point for discussion and inclusion for our families and communities at large.

1. Please don't tell me you feel sorry for me.

Also included in this would be a request to not tell me it's a waste of a life or that my son could've been so much more. Sure, sometimes it's hard. Sometimes I wish life was easier for him. Sometimes I wonder why it all happened. In all of that wishing and wondering though there is never a point at which I think his life is wasted or that I feel hard done by. My son is a joy and a blessing. While I ›

might wish to make things easier for him I would never wish for him to be someone different. I do not feel sorry for myself and I don't want you to.

2. Think about moving a few pews up so families with children who have special needs can sit in the back.

I know Presbyterians love the back row. I know you want a quick exit so you can be the first to hit the brunch line at the Holiday Inn. For our sake, however, I would ask that you consider surrendering the back pew for us and families like us. Our son has some sensory issues that make loud music hard to handle sometimes. We don't want to disrupt the service so leaving us with the quick exit would be very kind. I assure you, should we run into each other at the Holiday Inn I will be glad to let you go first in the buffet line!

3. Please don't tell me he "should" be downstairs.

There are some people who think all children should be in Sunday school. I know that's how it used to be. I also know that you're running a wonderful program and many children love it. Unfortunately for our son, who struggles with communication and social interaction, it can be overwhelming for him. There are weeks where we can power through and others where he needs space upstairs. It's not that we don't appreciate your program or value what you offer; we just need to listen to his needs and do what's best for him.

4. Include many different types of learning styles and engagement.

If we manage to convince our son that Sunday school is a good idea, we've found that incorporating many learning styles keeps things moving, which allows for less downtime and reduces the potential for meltdowns. Incorporating physical, listening and visual learning styles into the program also helps more children engage. By including a variety of activities and means of engagement you're more likely to catch the attention of each child and find ways to include them all. And please don't feel bad if a parent stays downstairs with a child who has autism. It's not that they think you can't "handle" it. It's that they are there to support their child as they help navigate a potentially tricky situation.

5. If you want to chat with him following the service be sure to pause a little while you wait for his answer.

Each person with autism is different but one thing I have noticed is that children with autism may need a little more space in the conversation to process the words and craft a response. If my son takes some time answering after you've spoken to him he's not ignoring you, he's thinking. If he doesn't seem to grasp what you are saying after a few moments, try phrasing the question differently. Often I see people come up to my son and start to talk, then leave quickly and miss his response. He wants to engage—just give him the time he needs to do so.

6. Don't stare.

If a meltdown does occur, please don't stare. We are lucky that our son loves church but he's five. Any child who is five has moments of great drama. Add to that a communication deficit and sometimes you have to work hard to figure out where the drama is coming from and why. When you stare we feel more awkward than we already did. We are aware the situation is not ideal, but we want to worship with you. Please understand we are doing our best.

7. Recognize he's an individual.

I'm sure you've heard the phrase "When you've met one child with autism you've met one child with autism." This is very true! He's an individual. He is not an autistic child. He is a child with autism, and he has a personality of his own. Ask him about his cars. Talk to him about his favourite movies. Take time to really discover who he is. He's a sweet, funny boy. Don't be afraid of the differences. Embrace him for who he is, autism and all.

8. Don't sidestep or avoid us.

We want to feel like we're part of the community of faith. Don't avoid us because you don't know what to say. Just treat us the same as any other family. Ask us how therapy is going. Ask us what we did on the weekend. We would love to hear how you're doing as well.

9. If you are curious, ask!

If you don't know what autism is and would like to know more, ask! If you're curious as to why our son isn't in school, we would love to engage you and help you understand how we are trying to help him. Things might be different for our family and we know that to some it seems odd. We are happy to point you to resources and explain our situation.

This leads me to a larger point. If you are curious or wondering how you might make the church a more inclusive or welcoming place, ask! Families with children who have special needs would love to help you understand what might make the church a better place.

10. Love him and share God's love with him regularly.

He is a child of God. He loves church. He wants to be part of things and feel like he's part of the community. The best thing you can do for him is to shower him with love. Show him he is welcome here. Show him he matters to you and to God.

Becky Roushorne-Lau is a wife, mother and minister in Southwestern Ontario. She blogs at presbyterianrecord.ca.

ISTOCK

MEDITATION

Wholeness and Health

It is a challenge to be passionate and polite at the same time. By Ian Shaw

Imagine (and it might be stretch!) a mother over 65 whose health has been deteriorating for several months. Finally after a series of tests, a medical team assessed her situation and decided there were two possible treatment options that presented some therapeutic hope. Neither option was a guarantee and either could prove life-threatening. As well, the two choices were mutually exclusive. Pursue the one and the other was no longer possible.

The team presented their findings to the woman and her twin daughters, her only close ›

MEDITATION, continued

relatives. Both daughters cared deeply for their mother, though they were quite different in personality and in most of their personal priorities and perspectives. Over time in their adult lives they had grown apart, pursued different careers and developed dissimilar preferences for life's pursuits. Most of their recent contact had been with regard to supporting their mother as her health failed.

After the medical team had made their presentation and answered questions, they left the family to discuss and decide which treatment, if either, to pursue. As the daughters began to talk with their mother, it became evident that not only did each daughter prefer a different choice, but each felt very strongly about her preference and was highly negative about the other possible treatment.

After some preliminary consideration, the discussion became more intense as each daughter made the case for her preferred option. Both used a similar approach—she would emphasize the reasons for opting for her choice and list the reasons for rejecting the other treatment option. For the two children it seemed a black and white issue with no grey.

The mother felt beleaguered. She knew her children cared for her. She knew they often disagreed. And she knew that her health would not improve by doing nothing and she also knew that neither treatment might prove effective in restoring her health. And now the two people closest to her were becoming increasingly intransigent and animated, as each tried to persuade her to side with her choice.

Each of the daughters also felt highly distressed. Here was her much loved mother in serious difficulty and her sister wanted to pursue a risky procedure with no guarantee of success and wouldn't listen to clear facts that undermined that choice! It was hard to hear her mom's plea, "Please girls, let's try to keep this conversation civil!" Each daughter really believed that to give in would only lead to her mother's more rapid demise. It is difficult, even when your mom asks, to be polite and passionate in a situation like that, especially when you already have been long questioning your sister's life priorities.

What could now occur that would allow for the family to pursue a treatment choice that might alleviate the mother's failing health and also maintain some wholeness in family dynamics? What is needed for such a possibility to take place?

And the mother wondered in the silent stalemate that encompassed the room, "If I decide to go with the one option will I end up losing a daughter even if I regain my health? And will she lose her sister?"

As you ponder the above conflict, what do you think should happen next? What could now occur that would allow for the family to pursue a treatment choice that might alleviate the mother's failing health and also maintain some wholeness in family dynamics? What is needed for such a possibility to take place? Now try to write an ending that you consider a best-case (or a most likely case) possibility.

The above story doesn't fit congruently with the current debate before the church and I believe the calls for polite conversation in various pieces in the *Record* are wise. Nonetheless, while maybe not as pronounced as in the scenario above, there are widely divergent perceptions (hermeneutics) among us (and I'm sure more than just two). There are also some extremely strong feelings that the very viability of our denomination will be reduced if the position of the "other side" is affirmed. So what needs to happen so that the best decision can be made and perhaps wholeness and health remain possible within the PCC? Maybe the first two steps are to acknowledge that it is a challenge to be passionate and polite at the same time, especially in serious disputes that go deep into our spiritual centre, but also to recognize that even those who hold almost opposite viewpoints "love their mother." Whether or not we find ourselves in a best-case scenario when all is said and done, we might start with those two steps.

Rev. Ian Shaw is minister at St. Paul's, Simcoe, Ont.

ISTOCK

MINISTRY

Spaces to Flourish

Nine conversations to nourish a congregation. By Brian Fraser

It was the third time presbytery had tried to shut down Brentwood Presbyterian in Burnaby, B.C. Yet again, the small core of dedicated disciples from the congregation showed up at the meeting and convinced the court, especially the ruling elders, they deserved another opportunity. A new interim moderator (Jim Smith from Central, Vancouver) and a new quarter-time minister (Don Hill, then a critical care chaplain at St. Paul's Hospital, Vancouver) were appointed. Toward the end of Hill's term as interim minister, they called me in to do some visioning and planning to refocus, retool and rebuild the congregation for flourishing mission in its neighbourhood. ›

MINISTRY, continued

We decided what the most important barrier was to deal with and moved on it, one barrier at a time

That was over five years ago. After the vision and planning sessions, they invited me to minister with them on a half-time basis. I agreed the fourth time they asked, and it was one of the best decisions of my life.

As I look back on our journey together, there are nine kinds of conversations that have helped us co-create the congregation with Jesus Christ, one conversation after another. Here are the types of conversations we had:

1. Affirmative conversations about being loved and valuable.
Jim Smith and Don Hill had loved this congregation into a renewed sense of being loved by God and valuable in God's mission. No longer did they see themselves as small and dying, but as strong and ready to grow.

2. Curious conversations about what they valued most in the church.
This was where I started my visioning and planning work with them. Their answers were profound. They valued worship, learning, fellowship and service—their words, not mine. Those are the five marks of the New Testament church (with "learning" including the message and the teaching).

3. Focusing conversations on how to articulate this value.
After playing with a lot of words and possibilities, we arrived at "Nourishing souls to flourish in the grace of Jesus Christ through worship, learning, fellowship and service."

4. Analytical conversations about the resources we had to live this value.
This was a hard-nosed look at facilities, sources of revenue and expenses, but all within the positive framework of what we might do with the resources God has given to us to serve the values we held dear in Jesus Christ.

5. Dreaming conversations about what might be possible.
We knew we were marginally viable at best, with limited resources and few people. But the focus was on viability. That was our aspiration and desire. That framed the tone and substance of the conversations.

6. Practical conversations about what possibilities to choose as an initial step.
In the end, after a broad range of possibilities were explored, including the possibility of closing, we decided to focus on the quality of the opportunities we provided for Jesus Christ to encounter people on Sunday morning through worship, music and a potluck lunch. The lunch is crucial. They had been doing this for years. It provided a stimulating space for conversations about the future to be co-created, one conversation after another, now that those conversations had a focus they had co-created and believed in.

7. Realistic conversations about the barriers we faced to grow in faithful mission.
Remember, this is a five-year process, so far. We decided what the most important barrier was to deal with and moved on it, one barrier at a time. It meant buying a new grand piano, hiring a new music director, fine-tuning the worship experience, offering a weekly Jazz Evensong service on Wednesday nights, and getting known within the musical and arts community as a space with amazing acoustics. Barriers were opportunities rather than obstacles.

8. Enthusiastic conversations about what was happening and what could happen.
The vision was crucial in guiding these conversations. It helped us stay focused on what would work best to nourish souls to flourish in the grace of Jesus Christ. That focus gave the Holy Spirit a clearer path for the flow of her vitalizing energy.

9. Grateful conversations about contributions to the mission.
A lot of people, both within the church and the broader community, have contributed to the conversation-by-conversation growth of Brentwood over these past five years. Our regular attendance at worship has more than doubled, our givings have doubled, and we have invested over $60,000 into making our sanctuary available to the nieghbourhood as a community arts venue. Thanks to God and to those involved must be continual.

Jazz impresario and good friend Cory Weeds once told me that leaders in jazz make space for others to flourish and perform, then join them. That's been my mantra in working with this amazing congregation. We trust that Jesus Christ will lead us on into even greater depths of flourishing as his friends, one conversation after another.

Rev. Brian Fraser is minister at Brentwood, Burnaby, B.C.

ISTOCK

PROFILE

From Lachute to Lincoln Center

The remarkable career of Wayne Riddell. By Keith Randall

With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. (Colossians 3:16)

"Musical geniuses are often despondent, incoherent and given to long, painful silences. You would doubtless be shocked to learn that Wayne Riddell is none of these things. He is volcanically cheerful, amazingly articulate and deafeningly heard. Above all, Wayne is fun to be with," Rev. Dr. James Armour said, reflecting on a 30-year friendship. "A dedicated if somewhat demanding churchman, he is a perfectionist."

Armour, minister emeritus at the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul, Montreal, was speaking at a concert celebrating an honorary doctor of music degree conferred on Riddell by McGill University last May.

Stirred by a remarkable teacher named Juliette Rodrigue in Lachute, Que., Riddell mastered the score of Handel's Messiah by the age of 10 and, his feet barely reaching the pedals, at 14 became organist at the local United church his family attended. He played piano in the high school dance band and later paid for university playing in a combo at a Lachute bar while ›

Wayne Riddell

For 16 years from 1972 he was director of music at the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul, where the choir was the first recipient of a Canada Council prize as the nation's best

earning his degree at McGill's Schulich School of Music and serving as organist-choirmaster at Westmount Park United Church. Through the '60s, he taught in Montreal schools and later at his alma mater, founded the renowned Tudor Singers he led on tours of Canada, the U.S. and Europe. For 16 years from 1972 he was director of music at the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul, where the choir was the first recipient of a Canada Council prize as the nation's best. As choirmaster for the Montreal Symphony Orchestra for eight years he occasionally replaced Charles Dutoit on the podium. In 1988, Riddell was named to the Order of Canada for contributions to choral music. Today, as director of music emeritus at A&P, where he became a member in 1982, he remains active as a ruling elder and in many realms of the music he loves.

After travelling the world, Riddell lives today on the Lachute street where he was born and recalls his early years with evident pleasure.

"Juliette Rodrigue's doctor father sent her to Paris Conservatory and she returned to Lachute to teach music. For a country high school, we had a great music program with another exceptional teacher, so I went to McGill far more advanced than many of my colleagues."

But for all the fun and great times of pop music memory, Riddell's path toward choral music was firmly set, with religious music always front and centre.

"Music plays an important part in the expression of my faith," he says. "You'd read in many books that music is a handmaid to worship. It enhances and elaborates the service and can say what words alone cannot, can speak to a different side of your emotions. Of course, I believe that our A&P choir is the best in Canada. There are a couple of churches with professional choirs. We have 24 professional singers which most churches would consider to be the whole choir. We're lucky to have very high-end volunteers, many students from McGill, so we have 50-plus voices."

Any advice for churches with less musical talent?

"The person in charge of the music has to make the best of what they have and if they're at all imaginative, energetic or aggressive, they'll find music that will work with the singers they have and their abilities. It's not easy to do."

He shrugs off suggestions that many church musicians are stuck in the 16th and 17th centuries.

"There's a lot of important 20th- and now 21st-century music. Congregations have to be exposed to that. They don't have to like it but they won't know if they don't like it until they hear it. Many 20th-century composers write music I wouldn't call avant garde but certainly wouldn't be described as a 16th-century motet. There's Vaughn Williams, Gustav Holst, so many 20th-century composers."

As for those churches that have dabbled with rock quartets in the service?

"I don't like it, but that's just me. I can turn on any FM radio station and listen to that any time. For the one hour a week we'd like to be elevated and maybe exposed to something we wouldn't be otherwise."

If he was to choose his marooned-on-a-desert-island record, it would be the Bach Mass in B Minor.

And among the memories that might comfort the marooned choral conductor?

"When my Tudor Singers performed the spectacular concert at Lincoln Center, New York, in 1984 and in Europe when we sang in a couple of the big cathedrals like Yorkminster and Worcester in 1981. Those were pretty wonderful experiences."

Riddell would probably agree with Armour that his life, like the friendship Armour recalled, has been like the La Ronde roller coaster, with lots of ups and downs but, all in all, it has been an exciting ride.

Keith Randall is a freelance writer in Montreal.

Focus

Stories of mission, ministry and community

ISTOCK

MUSIC

Break into Song

Helping congregations find their voice.

By Hilary Seraph Donaldson

In my experience, learning and singing songs together in worship is a deeply formative act, one which strengthens communities and helps us encounter God in unexpected ways. But exploring something new in worship can be challenging, even daunting; we need a friend to guide us through the richness of music available to us.

I am a graduate student and a working church musician, and my passion is inspiring congregations to sing together. Last year I started a project called Break into Song (breakintosong.ca), which aims to inspire church leaders to make friends with new music.

Like many people my age, I spend (read: waste) a certain amount of time on YouTube watching videos about anything from cute kittens with yarn, to mini-lectures on ›

MUSIC, continued

how tropes in videogames shape our culture. Some of the content out there isn't so great, but some of it is not only well informed and cogently written, but also looks fantastic. One day it hit me: if I can learn how to fold a fitted sheet on YouTube (and be entertained at the same time), there should be a similar resource for inspiring and equipping leaders for vital congregational song. The result, *Break into Song* is a free web video series that is fun, educational, globally-minded, and inspired by the playful possibilities of worship.

Each episode features a particular worship song (such as the percussive African chorus *Sithi Haleluya* or Canadian folk favourite *She Comes Sailing on the Wind*), and explores the song's background and context, the best ways to teach it, and how to creatively incorporate it into worship. The videos include original interviews with composers and teachers, as well as tips on teaching, percussion and interpretation.

I think today's church musician

'I was fine in a group, sure, but I had resigned myself to the cold truth that I simply was not meant to be one of God's special soloists'

is stretched thinner than ever before. Even as we become more connected with music from all over the world, as the possibilities of church music expand, the church budget gets smaller. Worship leaders are left knowing there is much that could be done, but with limited resources at their disposal. At the same time, the idea of getting music off the page and leading worship as a cantor or song leader (in the styles suggested by the Iona Community and Taizé, among others) is having a moment. The Hymn Society of the United States and Canada has led the way with campaigns and conferences that promote congregational song pedagogy, and a theology of learning in worship.

My work is also informed by my engagement as a teacher for Music that Makes Community, which is all about teaching songs in community.

On the website for this organization there is a blog by Rev. Meagan Manas of Queens, New York. She writes: "I grew up steeped in music—piano lessons and choirs, playing at my church regularly as a teenager. But I never felt confident as a singer. I was fine in a group, sure, but I had resigned myself to the cold truth that I simply was not meant to be one of God's special soloists. Over the years since then, I've become a Presbyterian minister, and had the chance to work with several very talented musicians in NYC churches and in ecumenical worship settings at the United Nations and Ecumenical Advocacy Days. Through these experiences of creative, imaginative, expansive worship, I've witnessed the power of simple music used to engage people of different cultures, languages and backgrounds; the magic that happens when folks are invited to join their voices into something beautiful. I've also realized just how dependent I am on 'someone else' being there to work this magic."

Her confession probably resonates with many leaders of worship, and from where I stand, equipping leaders such as Manas is more important than ever for our communities. I wanted to contribute to this movement by creating a resource that could be accessed from anywhere and which might inspire people who wouldn't otherwise know where to begin. Have a look and see for yourself; you'll be amazed at what can happen once you break into song.

You can see the first episodes at breakintosong.ca.

Hilary Seraph Donaldson is based in Toronto.

PWS&D is Seeking a Director

Presbyterian World Service & Development

The Presbyterian Church in Canada, through the Life and Mission Agency, is seeking to fill the executive position of Director, Presbyterian World Service & Development at the national office in Toronto.

PWS&D is the development, emergency relief and refugee sponsorship agency of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. In Canada, PWS&D assists congregations in providing educational and advocacy programs. PWS&D works ecumenically with partners around the world, as well as with government agencies.

The Director is accountable to the General Secretary of the Life and Mission Agency and to the PWS&D Committee, a Standing Committee of the Life and Mission Agency. The Director oversees a budget of approx. $3 million and manages a team of 10 staff.

Find the full job application online at
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ISTOCK

PASTORAL CARE

Living Confidence

How faith alone helps us care for those in need. By Cynthia Chenard

The balloons and streamers were blowing in the summer breeze on the front lawn when we pulled into the driveway. Friends and family were gathered, helping themselves to the treats laid out on the picnic table. All eyes turned to us as we got out of the car. We were not part of the family, we were not friends, we were not invited to this welcome-home party. Yet we were there. Myself and a police sergeant. We shut the doors of the police car and asked to speak to the owners of the house—the mom and dad. There are no words, no platitudes, nothing that can be said in the ›

PASTORAL CARE, continued

seconds which follow telling parents that their child, who had been away on a summer vacation, whom they were waiting to welcome home, was not coming home. The car accident an hour earlier had claimed their child's life. No words can encompass the grief; all that can be offered is faith. By faith alone such situations are faced.

I was asked last year to be a part of the panel for the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation—the *Sola Fide* or "By Faith Alone" panel. As I began to think about what that means to us today, 500-plus years later, I kept coming back to my ministry as a congregational minister as well as a police chaplain. Moments of great wonder and awe filled my mind as I reflected on how many times there was only faith to see me or others through a situation. What does "by faith alone" mean to me, to us, from a pastoral perspective?

Scripture tells us that we are justified by faith. We are "justified" or made right with God through faith, not works. This speaks of relationship—relationship with God and by God's virtue, relationship with one another. Our faith, right from the get-go, binds us together in our relationship with God and care for others. So how does doctrine, this belief of faith alone help in our pastoral care of one another? Of God's people?

In my years as a congregational minister and as a volunteer chaplain with the police department, there are experiences where a person questions the presence of God in the midst of a personal tragedy. "Why would God let this happen?" "There is no God if this can happen!" Remember the Vietnam War slogan—"God has gone AWOL." Other times a person, in grief, tries to bargain with God—one of the stages of grief identified by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross: "If you do this, God, I'll do that." In a sense attempting to *do* something to warrant the Creator's mercy and compassion. Yet, we believe, it is only by faith that our relationship with God will be healed and we will be made whole.

We must remember, however, how Reformer Martin Luther described this kind of faith: it is a "living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that a man (sic) would stake his life on it a thousand times." This faith by which a person is justified, made right with God, is not merely intellectual or creedal acceptance. It is an active seeking out of God in our midst, a confidence in God's presence and grace.

Sometimes we are stripped bare and it is that daring confidence that somehow, beyond our comprehension, we will get through it with faith in God

In pastoral crisis I find that it is that "living confidence" and "daring" in the face of tremendous adversity which helps in care of those in need. This is not a faith that gives pat answers of "it is God's will" but a faith that allows, that dares to allow, space for the unknown, for mystery and questions. In the "see through a glass dimly" times, as Paul describes times of unknowing to the Corinthians, it is by this faith alone we are allowed to say "I don't know" to a suffering person when they ask "why did God do this?" or "why did God let this happen?" and have the daring confidence that in the honesty of faith, God's presence and mercy will be known, God's grace will be poured out.

Faith alone is sometimes all that is left in a pastoral situation, meaning we have nothing left but faith. Loss of all else that matters leaves only the bare bones of what it means to be alive, a child of God. Sometimes we are stripped bare and it is that daring confidence that somehow, beyond our comprehension, we will get through it with faith in God—we will be put right, justified, by that faith.

Romans 8:28 says "all things work together for good for those who love God." Again, it is the willingness to allow ourselves to place faith in the love and mercy of a God we do not always understand, in a circumstance we do not understand. Faith will tell us all things will be in the hands of God and God can create out of our chaos. It is not easy but it is, often, all we've got. It is also important to remember the faith of others. *Sola fide* speaks of the faith alone which puts us right with God. However, it is not a couch-potato faith.

If we know and believe in God's mercy and grace through Jesus Christ, that will motivate, encourage—insist—that we live such faith for others to see. It also may be that our faith in God's mercy and grace will help another through the crisis they are facing.

During the early days after Swiss Air flight 111 crashed off the shores of Halifax in 1998, we police chaplains were tasked with care of many, including family members of those 229 killed in the crash.

On one occasion a chaplain, Father Bill Burke, escorted a young woman down the rocks at Peggy's Cove to the water's edge. She tossed flowers into the sea in memory of her fiancé.

Bill asked if she wished him to say a prayer. Her response was she didn't have much faith left in God. Bill gently said "that is okay. Let me have enough faith for both of us." That was September. Three months later in December, Bill received a Christmas card saying, "Do you still have enough faith for both of us?"

It is times such as these in pastoral care, when what we have to offer is our faith—our faith alone—for all else is gone and it is in those times, when we hold fast to our faith in God, that we will be comforted and comforting, not giving pat answers or platitudes that are at best disrespectful of a person's pain and at worse insulting to a person's struggle in grief, but offering a ministry of faithful presence, of strength in faith to say, "I don't know why this has happened, but I do know, with certainty, God is with us."

This type of faith in God's saving power is repeatedly shown in scripture when it is not the one who is ill but a friend or a family member who brings them to Jesus. Whether it is a mother asking for Jesus' healing for her daughter, the centurion for his slave or friends lowering another through the roof, it is that faith alone which motivates us to help others when their faith is fragile. It is such faith that allows us to be ministered to as well, when we are broken, confused and in need of care.

We have no answers most of the time; yet it is by our faith, our faith alone, in a merciful, righteous, always-present God that we will be put in right relationship with God and with one another.

Rev. Dr. Cynthia Chenard is minister at Iona, Dartmouth, N.S.

ISTOCK

THEOLOGY

Saved by Faith Alone

Yet faith leads us to seek change in the world. By Peter Bush

Salvation is by faith alone, not works, the Reformers contended. Yet as James writes in the New Testament, faith without works is dead (James 2:17).

Anna Robbins, dean of Acadia Divinity School, noted in a paper presented in Halifax last November, that this interface between faith and works leaves no room for a privatized faith. Faith is to lead us to do good works in our interactions with others and in our engagement with the world. Our works, she said, bear witness to the veracity of the faith given to us. Faith is an inner truth, which bears fruit in our actions, words and attitudes.

Robbins was one of the speakers at the Reformation@500 event presented by the

Committee on Church History at Atlantic School of Theology on *Sola Fide* or Faith Alone, a watchword of the Reformation.

The gathering was reminded by Laurence DeWolfe, professor of pastoral theology at AST, of two classical theological terms. Salvation by faith alone starts with justification, God's gift of forgiveness in and through Jesus Christ. Justification is an unmerited gift. It cannot be obtained by wishing for it, by working for it. Both justification and the ability to believe we are justified are gifts from God. Justification is to lead to sanctification, the process of becoming ever more like Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our example. Again sanctification is a gift from God, one in which we partner with the Holy Spirit so our discipleship as followers of Jesus is evident in our words, actions and patterns of life.

Tim Archibald, minister of King's, New Minas, N.S., called for bold discipleship. Using the example of George Mueller who operated an orphanage in England, Archibald described faith as the boldness to trust that God would provide what was needed when it was needed; our calling is to step out in faith. Here then faith is not mental agreement with a series of statements about God; instead, faith is a bold confidence to follow God's call to serve Him and the world.

Lifting up the themes of bold discipleship and the public living of faith, Charles Cook, minister of Bethel, Riverview, N.B., described how his wife, Cathy Cook, felt compelled by the Holy Spirit to request a sidewalk be built in a subdivision in their community so children walking to and from school would not need to walk on the road, and be at risk of being struck by a car. Neighbours told her others had tried to get a sidewalk but had failed. Cathy Cook believed this was God's call, and despite the discouragements, she trusted God would see it through to the end. The sidewalk was built. Faith leads disciples of Jesus to seek change for neighbourhoods, towns and cities, and the world.

Both justification and the ability to believe we are justified are gifts from God. Justification is to lead to sanctification, the process of becoming ever more like Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our example

Anne Marie Dalton, a Roman Catholic, teaches at St. Mary's University. Because of her commitments to the environment and development in Third World contexts, Dalton is asked by students who desire fundamental change in the world, "How do you keep on working on these issues without becoming cynical or quitting?" Her answer is that faith must carry the person desiring to be an agent of change. The disciple of Jesus is enabled to keep on keeping on only through faith. Faith fires the ability to keep on serving, believing the Kingdom of God, which is here in part, will be fully realized some day.

Cynthia Chenard, minister of Iona, Dartmouth, and chaplain for the RCMP and the Halifax Regional Police, bore witness to the power of faith in the face of a pastoral crisis. She said, "When you are sitting with a family that is just hearing of the tragic death of their son, there are no words, no techniques, the only thing the chaplain can bring is faith. Everything else gets stripped away." Chenard's stories echoed the faith of Julian of Norwich who when faced by the devastation of the plague spoke words of hope: "All will be well, all will be well, all manner of thing will be well." When we seek to be with people in crisis, faith is all we have.

This lively conversation added to the stories of faith, thereby enlarging and sharpening participants' understandings of *sola fide*, faith alone.

The conversation about faith alone was the second of five taking place between 2013 and 2017, exploring "the five *solas*" of the Reformation. Sponsored by the Committee on History and funded through the Ewart Endowment for Theological Education and the Conference Fund of the Life and Mission Agency, these events are preparation for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017. The conversations seek to address the questions: What might the five *solas* say to the church in Canada today? Are the 500-year-old slogans robust enough to be relevant today?

The fall 2015 gathering, at the Presbyterian College, Montreal, on Reformation Day will explore Scripture Alone. The 2016 gathering in Winnipeg will be followed by the finale in Toronto in 2017.

Rev. Peter Bush is minister at Westwood, Winnipeg.

Sustaining Missions

Answering an executive director's cry for help.

by Andrew Faiz

Illustration by Emma Hanquist

It was a cri de coeur.

Rev. Margaret Mullin, executive director of Winnipeg Inner City Missions, posted a question to the *Presbyterian Record*'s Facebook page and to a page for friends of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. She wrote: "Please help a not-so-small, not-for-profit executive director by thinking through and responding to this post. I am open to any suggestions. How does someone who is responsible for fundraising, marketing, communication, finances, budgeting, program, and all the human and physical resources—not to mention being the lead pastor of an inner city church—work smartly towards finding sustainable funding?"

Rev. Paulette Brown, currently minister at St. Andrew's, Humber Heights, Toronto, and previously executive director of Flemingdon Gateway Mission, sent Mullin a private message stating that there is no way she can manage all those things without killing herself.

Brown immediately followed with a more substantial response, opening by apologizing for her flippancy. Mullin had taken no offense. She admitted that her post had been a way to blow off steam.

Margaret Mullin has been at WICM's tiller since its inception in 2003 following a merger of two existing ministries. The mission serves ›

Aboriginal people in Winnipeg. It provides immediate needs—a meal, a hot drink, guidance, some financial assistance; and also housing, worship, counselling. The opening sentences from its website (wicm.ca) tell the story: "Michele was a street worker seven years ago. Now she has a diploma in Child and Youth Work from a community college and is working as the Child and Youth Program Co-coordinator at Winnipeg Inner City Missions. Michele's three adult children have all returned to school. If Mom could do it, so can they."

That the work done by Mullin and her team at the mission is good and worthy and that the mission is a jewel within the Presbyterian Church in Canada is not contestable. Congregations from across the country support the mission; as does the local presbytery and Canadian Ministries.

The same was true of Flemingdon Gateway Mission, which worked with inner city immigrant youth in a high density neighbourhood near the PCC's national offices. (I was on the board of this mission.) Over the course of its seven years the work done by Paulette Brown and her team was remarkable. The mission closed last year due to financial stress.

But ... money!

A FEW WEEKS AFTER MARGARET MULLIN'S POST, she met Paulette Brown and me on Skype.

Both of these women have been trained as spiritual leaders, but as executive directors they find they do not have the corporate skills required by an agency.

"These are not skills that you are taught as a minister," says Brown. "These are skills that are found in the corporate world. It's not exclusively about preaching the gospel and interpreting the gospel for our times. It's about running something that is financially accountable and sustainable. Those are big words and fully loaded and a lot more than what I found I could offer."

WICM needs a development officer. As soon as Mullin mentioned that, both Brown and I nodded our heads. All the differences between a mission and a church congregation, between a session and a board, are perfectly illustrated in the concept of a development officer. The Christendom model of church grew into a self-sustaining budget model—build it, fill it, and the congregation will pay for it. Folks in the pews want to be good stewards; they are open to being asked to give more of their time and resources. They in turn ask for a certain amount of managerial skill but not a great deal.

A congregation has to live within its budget and that budget is raised within the congregation. It's a tight internal cycle.

A mission often has no internal funding options. Its budget is raised from outside sources—from national offices, from presbytery, from Presbyterians Sharing, and increasingly from governments and foundations. Competing in the secular marketplace for money is a full-time job. The applications are complicated and require a great deal of information; the reporting (if you're lucky enough to get some funding) is detailed. Everything requires attention and a mission needs a development officer to take on this load.

Paulette Brown spent an inordinate amount of time meeting with potential funders. Some funders had complicated protocols. One funder demanded that all applicants take a weeklong course on vision analysis. (If approved the funder was known to give $25,000 per annum to general funds, as opposed to specific programming, for multi-year agreements.) Brown and I took that course together (they wanted the executive director and a board member) and it was useful in part in helping us learn the language of the not-for-profit community and in focusing our vision statement. Flemingdon Mission wasn't approved for funding in that cycle and that week took a toll on both of our day jobs.

So, Mullin needs a development officer, but that could add up to $50,000 (or more) to her budget—you can see the problem. You need to raise a substantial amount of cash to hire somebody who can then (a year later or perhaps more) help steady your cash flow, keep it in line with the cost of living and perhaps even develop new initiatives.

Foundations and governments are careful about working with faith-based organizations, which are seen in some circles as having particular social mandates.

Competing in the secular marketplace for money is a full-time job. The applications are complicated and require a great deal of information; the reporting (if you're lucky enough to get some funding) is detailed

At the same time, faith-based missions have to be careful about the source of some foundational and government funding.

"We operate out of our gospel call," Paulette Brown says. "When you are doing that as a mission you are walking a line. It is difficult to remain within the church and to galvanize the resources you need. You have to step out of the church, galvanize that support, and at the same time, you have to make certain that whatever is happening is something the church can accept."

Lottery-generated funds, for example, a common resource for many secular agencies, are a no-go for many faith-based organizations. Mullin works with people who have turned to gambling to support their drug habits. She can't as a minister of word and sacraments turn to monies raised from gambling.

And so it is with foundations as well; monies that come from the sale of liquor or tobacco perhaps. Finding a development officer, who is conversant with the non-profit jargon, and is sensitive to the mission's gospel call and to the moral and ethical values of a church-related mission, is not easy. Even if a mission has the cash, finding that person is a task unto itself.

THE FLEMINGDON GATEWAY MISSION was born from the dissolved Gateway Community Church; the closing session of the church became the opening board of the mission. We were all church people with church thinking. We were prayer-filled and well-intentioned but ill-prepared for the realities ahead of us.

Mullin is happy with the board she has now but that took time and care. "I had to talk to the board and tell them we need some specific skills to sustain and maintain this mission. It took about five years to recruit good people onto the board and to find people who were outside of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. We even had to get our bylaws revised through presbytery."

A session is not a board of directors. If a session is built with any care, and more and more are than before, it is still a reflection of the insular Christendom model. It does not seek to go outside the boundaries of the church, of the particular congregation. A board cannot afford such reserve.

At the very least a board needs financial acumen, community contacts, fundraising prowess and hopefully networks, knowledge of legalities affecting the particular mission, human resources and managerial experience, and a gospel call.

WICM had to ask presbytery to allow non-Presbyterians on its board. It now has six professionals, three of whom are Aboriginal, four of whom have no knowledge of church structures. Like many executive directors of faith-based missions, Margaret Mullin is the liaison between the religious organization and its branches, secular organizations and their mandates, and various individuals who are not conversant with one or the other.

A church sends one of its ministers, Paulette Brown explains, into a community with a sense of call to pursue a mission. But once in the field, that person is not so much a minister as they are an executive director. Brown had to learn this the hard way—neither she, nor presbytery, nor her board (a former session), nor the community she was serving at both the church or in Flemingdon Park, understood the awkwardness of wearing the different hats.

Margaret Mullin is Ojibwa-Irish and can walk the tightrope between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. Prior to this job she was a nursing administrator and can walk the tightrope between church and secular systems. But as Brown argues, she shouldn't have to.

THE PROBLEM IS, if I could word it that way, there is no villain here. Instead there is an eager collection of good intentions working on different models.

Canadian Ministries provides seeding and operating funds to many missions, congregations, church plants, ›

Funders are not just about supporting worthy causes—there are so many of them. Funders want to support a sustainable organization. So they seek audited budgets, community networks, and a complicated list of accountable results

and various efforts across the country. It cannot be all for any one; nor can it hold one above the others. Plus, given the declining rolls anguished over daily across the Presbyterian Church, it dips from a smaller pool each year. Its committee struggles over the discernment they're asked to make annually.

Presbyteries want to be helpful as well. East Toronto was continuously kind to Flemingdon Gateway Mission; as were many of the congregations in the presbytery. Generous donations arrived each year. But the same truths apply here as well—can't cover all the costs and can't do it all the time.

Foundations focus their givings, as they must, not only for their own wellbeing but for the demands from the Canada Revenue Agency. Through complicated applications and reporting methods they seek to find not just the agencies doing the work they will support, but also those which have sound leadership and strong financial sense. Often an applicant must provide several years of audited budgets and have their own corporate entity along with a tax designation.

Governments—ditto. Plus they often provide funding only for specific programs, so portions of salaries, rentals and other administrative costs, including that development officer, would not necessarily be covered by those grants. In my years of volunteering on secular community boards—social services, legal or health, etc.—I often heard stories of agencies that had healthy program funding but were struggling to meet administrative costs.

Funders are not just about supporting worthy causes—there are so many of them. Funders want to support a sustainable organization. So they seek audited budgets, community networks, and a complicated list of accountable results. They ask things that churches have not asked of themselves for a long time: Do you have the skills, the connections, the acumen and the talent to work this worthy cause for a long time?

AS CHRISTENDOM CONTINUES TO DISINTEGRATE (many have argued it is dead and gone, except the Church hasn't noticed) and as congregations move awkwardly from the comfort of their pews into the streets, seeking their gospel call in the community at large, new ways of doing church will be tested, tried, failed, modified and tried again.

As new models of church are developed, new models for funding must be found as well. The fact is there is a lot of money out there, in foundations and governments, and maybe even with presbyteries and national offices. Getting at it, building the relationships to sustain it, finding trained people to manage it, is a huge challenge facing the church.

A mission or agency needs to have a track record to access secular funds. And this is where church partnerships can really help. Within the boundaries of every presbytery are people who have the skills to meet these challenges. Those people don't want to sit on committees, for if they did we'd know of them already. No, they first must be found and then asked to help in ways which may be foreign to our traditions.

Sessions have to be trained to be boards; teaching and ruling elders have to be trained to be executive directors and leaders; promoters of worthy causes have to be trained to complete funding proposals, to develop community networks. Presbyteries and the national offices can help in providing this training. We have to be open to learning—this may require restructuring our own institution. Inch by inch.

Think of Michele, the woman mentioned on WICM's website. As Margaret Mullin explains, those

Rev. Paulette Brown, right, was executive director of the now-closed Flemingdon Gateway Mission, Toronto. Rev. Margaret Mullin, bottom left, is executive director at Winnipeg Inner City Missions.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PAULETTE BROWN AND WICM

few lines naming a transformation took many years. The blessed Michele had to be embraced and comforted, her lifetime of anxieties had to be eased. This required several people holding her hand over a long period of time; and then gently nudging her towards an education that would change her life, and make the lives of others better.

That costs money. And Michele is worth it.

NEAR THE END OF THE FLEMINGDON GATEWAY MISSION, when the writing on the wall was carved in stone, many members of the community gave their testimonials to the board and to the presbytery. Many were new immigrants who praised the mission for helping ease their entry into their adoptive country. One mother said her pre-teen daughter was headed into a world of gangs and drugs before the mission redirected her. Many, many powerful testimonies.

But ... money.

But money, only because all of us decision makers were engaged in thinking in terms of the self-sustaining congregational model. Reflecting back on those meetings I realize there was a clash of cultures at play. Flemingdon Gateway Mission (its common name, though it changed to Flemingdon Community Mission in the last year) was formed as a mission and judged as a congregation; it died in the divide between those two models.

Mullin has been able to stretch herself, along with the board and WICM, over that chasm for many years, but as Brown warned her, it's not emotionally or physically sustainable. And she's not the only executive director within the church holding it all together. They need to be brought together into a room, feted and then heard. They already know what church will look like a generation from now.

Andrew Faiz is the Record's *senior editor.*

FROM THE MODERATOR

A Good Set of Instructions

A blessing, indeed. By Stephen Farris

One of the characteristics of our Presbyterian Church is the yearly election of the Moderator of the General Assembly. The Presbyterian family has been electing moderators much longer than our nations have been electing presidents or prime ministers! Our General Assembly still formally elects its own moderator early in the Assembly but there has never been anyone different elected, since the present system began, other than the sole nominee determined prior by a national ballot of ministers and representative elders. So many congratulations to Rev. Karen Horst, on her election as sole nominee for Moderator of the 141st General Assembly. I have known Karen for many years and am sure she will be a gift to the church during her term as moderator. May God bless her and bless the church through her.

Another distinctive characteristic of the Reformed tradition of which Presbyterians are a part is that we think the law of God is mainly a good thing. It is sweeter than honey, a light for our feet and a lamp for our path, as the psalmist would say. Now, we do know that we are not put right by obeying the law of God or, indeed, by any achievement of our own. It is all a gift of free grace on which we lay hold by faith. And, of course, anything, including the law of God, can be misused. But at heart the law remains a blessing.

There were approximately three million moving parts in neat plastic bags in the box and if you put a gas barbecue together wrongly, the thing might blow up

This is how it is supposed to work. If the love of God actually means anything to us, we will want also to show our gratitude to God. Grace evokes gratitude. We don't want to sink back into a warm bath of piety and do nothing for God or for others. One way to show gratitude is to offer our praise. Another way to show that gratitude is to live a life of grateful obedience. The law of God shows us how to do just that.

I remember trying to put together a gas barbecue with my father-in-law and a very senior ministerial friend of his. I am not Mr. Fixit and the other two were, well, both have passed on and it is unseemly to speak ill of the dead. But that wasn't the real problem. When we opened the shipping container we realized that the main problem was that the instructions were missing. (More exactly, we did have what appeared to be instructions in Chinese but since none of us could read Chinese, they were less than completely useful.) There were approximately three million moving parts in neat plastic bags in the box and if you put a gas barbecue together wrongly, the thing might blow up. We tried to put the barbecue together from first principles. Three ministers and a screwdriver. This had the makings of a bad scene from a sitcom.

After about 20 minutes we were in serious danger of doing one another injury with the hand tools when my wife burrowed into the box and found wedged under a flap... the instructions. What a gift! We now had instructions from the original equipment manufacturer showing us how to put this very complicated appliance together. The instructions from the maker were actually a blessing.

In the Hebrew of the Old Testament, the word that is normally translated as "Law" is "Torah." But "Torah" could just as easily be translated as "instruction." The "Maker" blesses us with instruction that helps us safely put together this very complicated thing called life. Instruction from the "Maker" is indeed a blessing.

Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris is dean of St. Andrew's Hall at VST.

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People & Places

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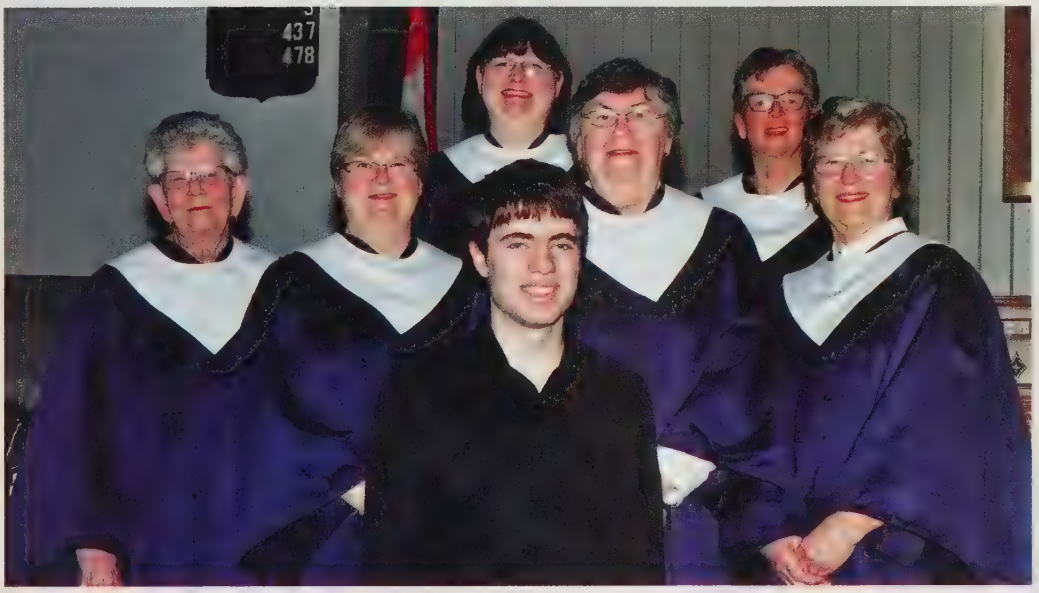

BOSTON, HALTON HILLS, ONT.

Josh Sinclair was only 15 when he was asked to lead the choir. Now at 17, the talented pianist, organist and choir director has received his Associate of the Royal Conservatory (ARCT) diploma. On Feb. 8, the congregation presented him with a gift in appreciation of his musical achievements and his gifted service. Standing behind Sinclair are Margaret Pearson, Susan Croll, Brenda Wilson, Donna Parsons, Marlene Pearson and Audrey Peddie.

NATIONAL OFFICES, TORONTO

On March 26, staff at the church's national offices decided to break out some perfectly purple outfits to get people talking about epilepsy. Purple Day was created in 2008 by Cassidy Megan of Nova Scotia, who faced her own struggles with the neurological disorder and the seizures it produces. Now her Purple Day has become a worldwide campaign.

MOUNT ZION, RIDGETOWN, ONT.

The church's special events committee organized a spooky night on Oct. 17, 2014. Members dressed up, enjoyed a delicious potluck dinner and played some games. Three people walked away with bragging rights for their great costumes—you can see a photo of the winners on our website.

THE OTHER SIX DAYS

Weird, Wonderful, Worrisome

Things to think about. By Bradley Childs

DOCUMENTARY

The film is called *Going Clear: Scientology and the Prison of Belief*. Now as we all know, 75 million years ago the Galactic Federation of Planets led by Zenu, the Supreme Ruler, rounded up aliens from various planets and froze them. The bodies of the frozen were then loaded up and taken to Earth and dumped into the Hawaiian volcanoes. Zenu then had hydrogen bombs dropped into the volcanoes. The aliens died of course but their souls were captured by Zenu as they floated up into the sky. He forced them to watch brainwashing films and then released them onto the Earth. When the first people evolved from lesser life forms, the souls of the tortured alien beings found rest by living as parasites within these new humans. And to this day, all of our sadness and problems are caused by the residual alien spirits living within us.

If you didn't already know, this is a small part of the Church of Scientology. But little is actually known about this fascinating religious group. *Going Clear* is a documentary film by Alex Gibney that appeared at the Sundance Film Festival this year. It also aired in March on HBO and focused on how people become attracted to and gripped by scientology. It is extremely interesting. Watch it, watch the reviews, watch the Church of Scientology's responses to it. Oh, and keep in mind that we too believe many things even our own scriptures say are "foolishness to the wise." So you know, be careful what you do with those stones.

FIND IT @ **hbo.com/documentaries/going-clear**

MINISTER'S BLOG

Rev. John Shuck is a minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA). He gained attention when his church, Southminster wrote an overture to the national church with the hopes of changing the denomination's language about marriage from "a man and a woman" to "two people." Shuck appears to be a very kind and thoughtful man and has a strong component of social justice in his life and work. But what is most interesting about him is his stance on "belief-less Christianity." Rev. Shuck believes that religion is a human invention; the Bible is solely a human work; that God is a powerful symbol and that Jesus (though probably based on a historical person) is essentially a figure of legend. Now, I don't say this to be insulting to Rev. Shuck, I say it because he openly says it. I very much disagree of course with his theological views, but his position is growing and his blog is worth a read.

FIND IT @ **www.shuckandjive.xyz**

PERSECUTION

Deeper Life Christian Ministries is a multi-site, charismatic Christian church and church planting network in Lagos, Nigeria. The main church has more than 40,000 kids in Sunday school. And that's just the one site. The network actually has 700,000 people. Depending on how you categorize churches (and specifically Full Gospel, Korea) it is the world's largest church. But it's also a church in turmoil. The Bible studies have faced multiple attacks. One was entered by a gunman and fired upon. Nineteen people were killed and many others injured. They also receive a lot of hate mail and threats. In short, they are a target for persecution. Prayer support is much appreciated.

FIND IT @ **deeperlifeonline.org**

The Reformation Polka

VIDEO

CWCRadio is a small YouTube channel I don't really know much about. It seems mainly to be made up of the videos of a professor from Bethel University. However, there is also one goofy little animation. I don't know if it is the creation of Dr. Sam Mulberry or just something he came across but it's theology nerd gold. It's a three-minute bit about Martin Luther and is called *The Reformation Polka*. As far as information goes, it gets right to the point. Education is important. So are cartoons.

FIND IT @ **YouTube.com. Search for "The Reformation Polka."**

Rev. Bradley Childs is minister at First, Regina.

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Tabusintac, N.B., St. John's, New Jersey, Zion; and Bartibog, St. Matthew's; Full-time three-point charge; Interim Moderator Rev. Derek Krunys, 206 Wellington St., Miramichi, NB E1N 1M7; dkrunys@hotmail.com.

Synod of Quebec and Eastern Ontario

No vacancies at this time.

Synod of Central, Northeastern Ontario and Bermuda

Alma, St. Andrew's and Elora, Knox; Full-time minister for a two-point charge; Interim Moderator The Rev. Dr. Linda J. Bell; 5237 3rd Line, Rockwood ON N0B 2K0; 519-856-9155; drbell@hsfx.ca.

Amherst Island, St. Paul's; Half-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Karen Bach; 613-353-1033; karen.bach@utoronto.ca; stpaulsamherstisland.com.

Brampton, North Bramalea; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Geoff Ross; 905-451-1723; geoff@standrewsbrampton.ca.

Erin, Burns and Ospringe, Knox; Full-time minister for two-point charge; Interim Moderator Rev. Harvey Self, PO Box 276, Orangeville, ON L9W 2Z7; 519-941-1334; office@tweedsmuirpresbyterian.org.

Toronto, Glenview; Full-time senior minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Robert Faris; c/o St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, 73 Simcoe St., Toronto, ON M5J 1W9; 416-593-5600 ext. 229; b.faris@standrewstoronto.org.

Synod of Southwestern Ontario

Bayfield, Knox; Part-time; Interim Moderator Rev. John Henderson, PO Box 824, Exeter, ON N0M 1S6; 519-235-2608; henderson.johncharles@gmail.com.

Fingal, Knox; Half-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Ed Hoekstra, 970 Oxford St. W., London ON N6H 1V4; 519-471-2290 extension 222; ehoekstra@oakridge.london.on.ca.

Hamilton, Central; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Curtis Bablitz, 2138 Brant St., Burlington, ON L7P 3W5; 905-335-2640; minister@branthills.org.

Hamilton, MacNab Street; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Bob Geddes; 905-389-3001; bobgeddes@rogers.com.

Hamilton, St. Cuthbert's; Part-time stated supply; Interim Moderator Rev. Carol Wood; 905-525-9140 ext. 24127; woodrink@gmail.com.

Hanover, St. Andrew's; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Alex McCombie, c/o St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 20004, Hanover, ON N4N 3T1; 519-363-5392; standrews@wightman.ca.

Ingersoll, St. Paul's; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Mark McLennan, 59 Riddell St., Woodstock, ON N4S 6M2; 519-537-2962; roundrev@rogers.com.

Mooretown, St. Andrew's and Moore, Knox; Full-time ministry in a rural two-point charge; Interim Moderator Rev. Shirley F. Murdock; 914-1275 Sandy Lane, Sarnia ON N7V 4H5; 519-491-9892; sfm.rev@gmail.com.

Walkerton, Knox; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Owen Kim, 19 Brownlee St.

S., PO Box 526, Teeswater, ON N0G 2S0; 519-392-6955; maplemission@gmail.com.

Synod of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario

Winnipeg, Man., Kildonan Community; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Matthew Brough; 204-803-7743; matt@prairiechurch.ca.

Synod of Saskatchewan

Weyburn, Knox; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Bob Wilson; 2242 Goff Place, Regina, SK S4V 2T7; 306-525-3889; wilsonret@sasktel.net.

Synod of Alberta and the Northwest

Calgary, St. Andrew's; Minister of Family Ministries; Interim Moderator Rev. Helen Smith; 103 Pinetown Place NE, Calgary, AB T1Y 5J1; 403-285-7144; centennial.church@telus.net.

Synod of British Columbia

Burnaby, Burnaby Taiwanese; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Glen Davis; gjidavis@telus.net.

Cranbrook, Knox; Senior pastor; Co-Interim Moderator Rev. Doug Johns, 117 Norton Ave., Kimberley, BC V1A 1X8; 250-432-9531; revdjohns@hotmail.com.

Richmond, Richmond Presbyterian; Interim Moderator Rev. Bruce Dayton, 705-5050 Halifax St., Burnaby, BC V5B 2N5; 604-277-5410; dbd99dbd@gmail.com; for full details on the position, application and our church/congregation/community please visit the congregational profile at richpres.com/wp/rpc-congregational-profile.

Victoria, St. Andrew's; Full-time senior minister; Interim Moderator Dr. Laura Kavanagh; 250-415-8173; ltkknox@telus.net.

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Felicity Alexander

A Presbyterian annuitant who has good reasons to celebrate

Having her cake and eating it, too!

"Some years ago I attended a couple of Planned Giving seminars and, after discussions with my son—who is a CA and a Chartered Financial Analyst—I decided that a gift annuity would allow me to leave something to my church when I die, but still enjoy the benefit of income from the money while I am alive. So that's like having my cake and eating it, too. Here's what happened...

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The above words are adapted from a presentation Felicity Alexander made to her home congregation, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, in Brampton, Ontario, on the benefits of gift annuities for both donors and the church.

The above example is for illustrative purposes only. Gift annuity rates are subject to change.

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obituaries

Grieve, George "Grant," peacefully at the Southampton Centre surrounded by his family on Friday, February 27, 2015 in his 94th year. Loving father of Brian, Jim and his wife Carol, Kevin and his wife Jacinta, Gary and his wife Jackie; proud grandpa of Tyler, Austin, Eric, Kara, Brittney, Steve, Alexandra, Matt, Zach and Natasha; great-grandpa of Landon and Griffin. Predeceased by his beloved wife Elda (née Gowanlock) and his brother Gordon; survived by his sister Ellen Luten of Winnipeg.

Grant was born on May 31, 1921 to Irving and Maggie Grieve. He joined the Canadian Armed Forces in 1945 after his brother returned from overseas. He served with the Royal Canadian Regiment in WWII volunteering for the Pacific campaign. He was a life member with the Royal Canadian Legion. Grant worked as a greenskeeper with the Saugeen Golf Club for 27 years and with the town of Port Elgin, Ont., until his retirement in 1987.

Grant was an active elder of Knox Presbyterian Church, Burgoyne, from 1965 until 2006. The funeral was held in Port Elgin at the T. A. Brown Funeral Home, March 3, 2015.

Waite, Rev. Dr. Harry Edward, passed away in Barrie, Ont., on December 23, 2013 at the age of 77. Survived by wife Wilma (née Gale), daughter Donna Mayes (Shane), grandson Chris of Barrie and son Howard of Bowmanville.

A service of celebration was held at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Barrie, on January 4, 2014 with internment on May 6, 2014 at Barrie Union Cemetery.

Raised in Sarnia, Harry attended the Paterson Memorial congregation. He received his B.A. from the University of Toronto and graduated in 1960 from Knox College with a B.D. degree. His creativity and innovative ideas stood out in any job he felt called to, including his pastorates: First, Whitehorse, Atwood Presbyterian, Hopedale, Oakville, St. Andrew's, Barrie, and St. Andrew's-Chalmers, Uxbridge, Ont.

He was general secretary of the Board of Congregational Life (1983-88) and campaign director for "Live the Vision" (1991-94). He served as superintendent of missions for the Synod of Toronto-Kingston during the late 1990s. Harry gratefully received an honorary D.D. from Knox College in 1999, retiring that same year. Harry served on many boards and committees of the PCC, including the former Board of Christian Education, Communications Services, Church Doctrine, convened the Maclean Estate and the Congress '83 committees.

He treasured many friendships while coordinating and participating in mission trips to Guyana and Malawi. Harry and Wilma left Pickering to retire in Shelburne, returning to Barrie in 2005. Harry moved into Grove Park Long-Term Care, Barrie, in 2011 continuing to live with the challenges of Parkinson's Disease.

Harry was an avid reader and always dreamed of owning a boat. He was a devoted husband, father, grampa and everyone delighted in his keen sense of humour. We rejoice with all those touched by Harry's life and ministry.

FOR THE JOURNEY

Losing the Chains of Christendom

Asking the right question. By David Webber

Across the lake from our place there are a number of old log pilings strung out in a straight line down the lake towards the San Jose River. Gulls, terns and bald eagles frequently roost on the top of these pilings. When I paddle my canoe out to there it appears that they were established expressly for the purpose of roosting birds. Great streaks of bird whitewash trail down their sides. Nothing else within eyesight would indicate another use. However, 26 years ago when we first moved to Lac La Hache there was no doubt about the primary purpose of these pilings. The Blackwater Timber Company sawmill site was still well evident on the lakeshore with its sawdust burner and several other mill structures dominating the view. The only thing left now are the log pilings that once secured the sawmill's log-booms, now strung out down the lake like whitewashed tombstones.

Blackwater Timber went the way of the dodo bird. It was unable to, or perhaps better put, unwilling to make the necessary adjustments that changing economics, environmental concerns and government quotas demanded as society changed. Like so many small sawmills in the British Columbia interior, it became a victim of its own institutional inflexibility, unable to change as the societal realities of the day dictated.

Today as I look at those log piling tombstones I can't help but think about the Christian church. The Christian church in this country is in the midst of a rapidly changing society. Its inability to change with Canadian society and maintain some sort of relevance is expressed in many ways but none so simple and profound as the closing of many congregations across the country that have existed for decades. Sociologists, ecclesiologists and missiologists who study this church decline often point their fingers at the church clinging to its religious institutionalism, more specifically the stuff of institution that the church adopted soon after the fourth century as it entered what has been called the age of Christendom. It appears as though many people in Western countries like Canada have deemed the church, with its continuing Christendom focus on all things religious and institutional, to be irrelevant while at the same time expressing more interest than ever in the very things the New Testament declares the church ought to be about; faith, spirituality and participating in a unique egalitarian community. Apparently the institutional relics of Christendom like an ordained priestly cast, cathedrals and churchy programs do not speak to 21st-century Western society and its constituent people. This church withering movement in Canada is striking and very troubling.

What is most troubling is our own denomination's inability to change with the changing realities. For a long time now we have realized that we live in a post-Christendom society where many people do not confess Christian faith and most people don't attend or participate in the church. And yet we continue to be willingly locked in a Christendom mode of being. With a penchant for our religious institutionalism, our Christendom way of being church, we keep on doing the same thing over and over, like we are driven by some ingrained inflexibility. ›

ILLUSTRATION: BARRY FALLS

We keep on focusing on our precious polity, our version of holy orders, our cathedral-like buildings and our indoctrinating programs, desperately hoping that by some miracle we will attract people into our Presbyterian version of Christendom.

Albert Einstein is widely credited with saying, "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting different results." Perhaps ingrained inflexibility can be understood in the animal kingdom where it often results in tragedy, death and even extinction. But in the human realm, with the ability to assess, reason and predict, the kind of inflexibility we are exhibiting in the Presbyterian Church is nothing short of a kind of insanity. This only serves to make the church's decline even more troubling.

A case in point. In a little while it appears our denomination is going to attempt to become really avant-garde and begin to argue vehemently about the question concerning ordaining people who are not heterosexual. The question seems to be driven by what appears to be an altruistic desire to be inclusive. But real meaningful change and adaptation means getting the question right. In the face of Canadians' apparent suspicion of anything to do with religious institutionalism, the real question for the church is not if it should be ordaining people who are not heterosexual, but whether it should be ordaining people at all.

Ordination as we practice it is a relic of Christendom and seems to create a separate class in what purports to be a classless society that seeks to follow only one leader and head, Jesus Christ.

What is needed for a post-Christendom age is a post-Christendom church; a church loosed from the chains of Christendom. How do we go about becoming such a thing? This is the question we Presbyterians need to be addressing at General Assembly and at every court and in every congregation. In an age where people have found the church irrelevant and opted out, how do we develop the apostolic vision to engage in the mission, the great commission really, to take Christ and his community of faith to them? How do we take our minds and eyes and focus off of our polity and institutional survival and become primarily focused on the people of our society who need the love of Jesus? As Presbyterians, how do we give our life for the world, how do we take the love of Jesus to those who live beyond the church? It has got to amount to much more than trying to make our version of Christendom more inclusive by ordaining non-heterosexual people to be priests or ministers.

In practical terms, it means becoming primarily a sending church—a missional church—rather than an attractional church. It amounts to rediscovering the pre-institutional church of the New Testament where the focus is on living out the purpose of Jesus in the world in terms of mission and doing so in the most imaginative, Spirit-led and institutionally unencumbered ways. We already have elders enough for order. What we need for leadership now is people gifted by the Holy Spirit to function as apostles (faith pioneers), prophets (faith encouragers), evangelists (faith instillers), teachers (faith equippers) and pastors (faith shepherds). And please Lord, save us from turning these wonderful and biblical functions into institutional offices and ordaining people to them.

Rev. David Webber is newly retired from the Cariboo Presbyterian Church, B.C. His fourth book, When the Aspen Flowers: Blooming in the Creator's Garden *can be ordered through webberink@telus.net.*

This image is from Moussa Faddoul's La Madre ("Mother") photography exhibit, running from May 1 to 30, as part of the Scotiabank Contact Photography Festival in Toronto. The exhibit is in collaboration with Save the Mothers, a Canadian non-profit working towards maternal health in Uganda.

PHOTO BY MOUSSA FADDOUL / PHOTOREFLECTION.COM

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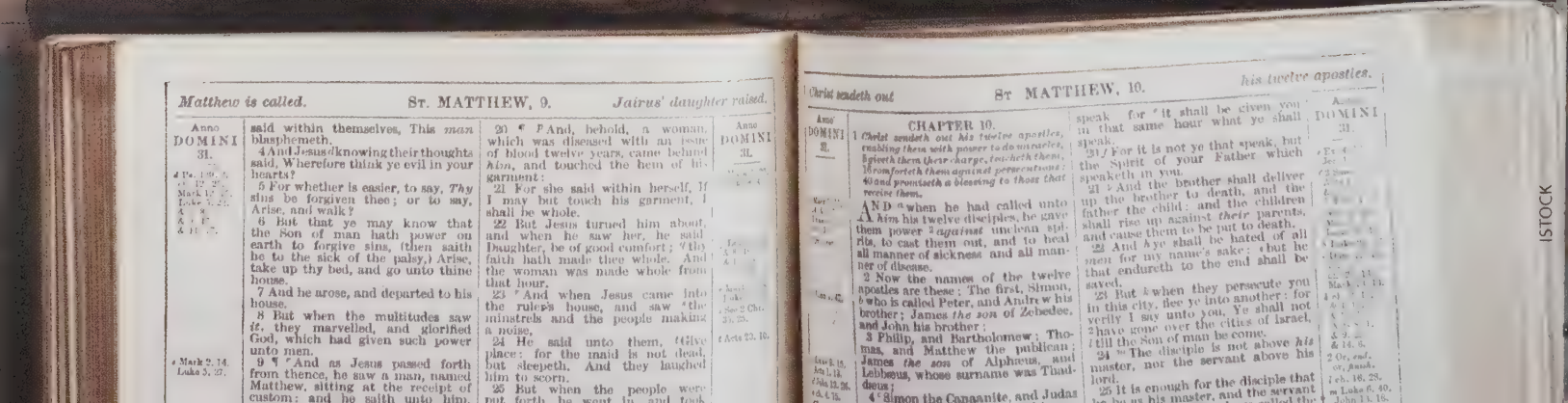
What I love about the ministry of Jesus is that he identified the poor as blessed and the rich as needy...and then he went and ministered to them both. This, I think, is the difference between charity and justice. Justice means moving beyond the dichotomy between those who need and those who supply and confronting the frightening and beautiful reality that we desperately need one another.

—RACHEL HELD EVANS



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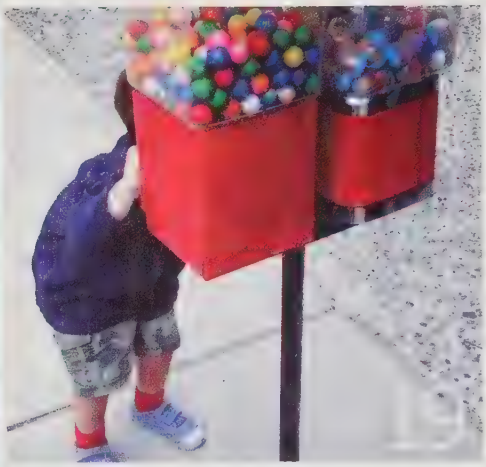

35 COVER STORY

Ministers as Missions

When it comes to the health of our clergy, Matthew Ruttan argues that the church needs to figure out how to protect, support and sustain.

Cover illustration by Yevgenia Nayberg

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FOR THE RECORD

Co-dependent Clergy

We need time for silence and discernment. By David Harris

Our cover story this month is one minister's experience of suffering a mental health problem related to his work and how he managed to get back on track.

This is not the first time we have addressed clergy health. Six years ago our award-winning cover story, Breaking the Silence, addressed the unhealthy state of many clergy in six Canadian denominations.

That was just a year after this month's author, Matthew Ruttan, graduated from seminary.

The editorial commenting on the article quoted a Methodist pastor who had written this in *The New York Times*: "'It's a personality trait that accompanies the sense of divine calling,' he said. 'You're feeding your need to be liked, your need to be valued, your need to be needed.'"

I noted that what the minister was describing is a co-dependency, where one person's needs feed the other's needs. It's a common affliction of the clergy.

So, has anything changed? It seems not. The website pastorburnout.com carries some dismal statistics from the United States.

- 70% don't have any close friends.
- 80% of pastors say they have insufficient time with their spouse.
- 80% believe that pastoral ministry affects their families negatively.
- 90% feel unqualified or poorly prepared for ministry.
- 90% work more than 50 hours a week.
- 94% feel under pressure to have a perfect family.

If we do not empty our minds of the clutter and stress of life, we don't give God a chance to speak

We have fewer congregational churches in Canada, so the percentages may be off somewhat, but there is no reason to think the results would be hugely different.

The background story is dismal, whatever the numbers are. Yet ordained ministry is not numbered among the most stressful jobs, which include firefighters, police and the military.

That does not excuse the church, because Christian churches claim to be focused on and supportive of families. The truth is, that may apply to all but the minister's family.

I wonder if at the root of this problem is a lack of discernment and a lack of making time for discernment? Both personally and corporately, when do we take the time—and it takes considerable time—to discern what God is calling us to live into?

Clergy feel a pressure to do—to visit sick and infirm—and to think—to produce engaging sermons that answer life's big questions, and programs to engage church members. But these pressures are rooted in needs, and can quickly devolve into the co-dependency mentioned above.

Discernment requires something different. It requires that we be still and silent. If we do not empty our minds of the clutter and stress of life, we don't give God a chance to speak.

Until we are still, until as a denomination, as a presbytery, as a congregation and as individuals we take the time to stop thinking and doing and just be, how will we ever be able to hear what God is calling us to be in this life?

And until we are able to discern what God is calling us to be, we—personally or corporately—will be full of anxiety. We will be unhealthy.

And as long as the institution is unhealthy, its leaders will be unhealthy.

David Harris is the Record's *publisher and editor.*

PRESBYTERIAN
RECORD

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Spur Discussion

Re Sustaining Missions, May

I hope it spurs much needed discussion and action. We must be willing to try new approaches.

ROBERT EWING, ONLINE COMMENT

Somebody you might want to invite into this discussion is Jen de Combe, the present executive director of Tyndale St. Georges in Montreal—tyndalestgeorges.com.

It has made the move to corporate/government funding over the past 20 years. Presbyterians Sharing contributes $50,000 to a multi-million dollar budget. The Anglican partners contribute about $30,000. The key to the shift has been in letting corporate types who had a personal connection with Tyndale in their youth (take a bow, Tony Infilese) and retired politicians like Reed Scowen—run the place.

For somebody used to church rummage sales, it is an experience to watch old Montreal money cough up $80,000 in an evening at a well-organized Tyndale fundraiser.

BARRY MACK, ONLINE COMMENT

Walk to Your Food

Re Loving the Earth, April

I was pleased to learn about all ›

LETTERS, continued

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the good work that is being undertaken by our denomination and the broader faith community to tackle the extremely important issue of climate change. The article was well thought out and had some excellent suggestions for addressing this concern. However, I was perplexed by the recommendation that a helpful spiritual practice would be to refrain from consuming certain types of foods, such as meat. This broad recommendation is problematic because the relationship between agricultural and climate change is an extremely complex one, and is in some situations incorrect. Ironically, there are situations where pasturing meat is the most ecologically-appropriate form of farming for a variety of reasons that are unfamiliar to most readers. A more helpful spiritual practice is to seek out locally-produced fruit, meat and vegetable sources that can be reached on foot or by transit. This would help to reduce the carbon footprint of the food purchased, and provide an additional form of much needed exercise.

HUGH SIMPSON, ONLINE COMMENT

Beauty Beyond Words

Re Isn't 'Winter Garden' an Oxymoron?, The Blooming Reverend Blog

This is the first time I read the *Record* online and enjoyed the blogs. You are right on about going out in winter. Now that I'm retired, my husband and I have a snowshoe trail that takes about one hour to complete and it's in the bush so no matter how cold it is there is a warmth in the woods. I now understand why the animals live in the woods, away from the wind and noise. There is a beauty beyond words in the woods after a fresh snowfall or a frosty sunshine morning with everything glittering. God's creation is beautiful in all seasons.

ELAINE FINDLAY, ONLINE COMMENT

Be sure to read the comments many people post on our website, and join the conversation! You can also follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/presbyterianrecord.

Record Rewarded for Stellar Work

The Presbyterian Record received 20 awards for reporting, story-telling, editing and design, 11 of which were first place awards of excellence. The Canadian Church Press and the Associated Church Press met for a joint conference in Toronto in May, closing with a gala dinner and awards presentation. The *Record*'s **David Harris** (editor and publisher) and **Connie Wardle** (senior writer) were the evening's hosts.

• The *Record*'s design team of **Caroline Bishop** (art director) and **Salina Vanderhorn** (designer) were named for **three first place citations from CCP** (Edition Layout and Design, March; Feature Layout and Design, February; Front Cover, April) plus another **first from ACP** (Magazine Cover, April). Vanderhorn also presented a seminar on design.

• Senior writer **Connie Wardle** was named for **two third place CCP citations** for reporting on Iraqi Christians (along with summer intern **Elizabeth Keith**) and for the ongoing LGBT issues within the PCC.

• Editor **David Harris** received an **ACP Award of Merit** for his January 2014 editorial on human trafficking.

• Managing editor **Amy MacLachlan** (along with various contributors) received an **ACP Award of Merit** for Raised Abroad, a column she conceived that tells stories of missionaries and their children.

• Senior editor **Andrew Faiz** won **first from CCP** for the May 2014 Douglas John Hall interview (along with Rev. Nick Athanasiadis and Rev. Barry Doner).

Other awards went to freelancer **Seth Veenstra** (a **first from ACP** and a **second from CCP**) for his June 2014 cover story on capital campaigns; **Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris** (**first, ACP**) for his Christmas story, The Wineglass; **Rev. Dr. Stewart Gillan** (**first, ACP**) for his February 2014 portrait of Nelson Mandela; **Laurie Watt** (**first, ACP**) for her January 2014 cover story on human trafficking; **Rev. Matthew Ruttan** (**first, CCP**) for his self-titled blog; **Rev. Phil Reinders** (**third, ACP**) for his column on spiritual disciplines; **Rev. David Webber** (**second, CCP**) for his For the Journey column; **Rev. Mona Scrivens** picked up a **third from CCP** for her honest reflection on multiculturalism, A Global Community, with freelance illustrator **Emma Hanquist** receiving a **third place from ACP** for the accompanying image; and freelance illustrator **Montse Bernal** got a **first from CCP** for the Douglas John Hall illustration in the May issue.

The *Presbyterian Record* seeks to carry out a ministry to all members of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, providing editorial material that may offer comfort, support or challenge, all the while encouraging growth in Christ's grace.

The magazine is produced monthly by a small editorial team. The majority of the content is written by members of the PCC, most of whom are not professional writers or reporters.

Congratulations to everyone involved, and thank you for your ongoing participation and support.

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POP CHRISTIANITY

Disagreeing Friends

There's nothing wrong with heated loquacity. By Andrew Faiz

Fred Stewart, exec of the Renewal Fellowship, and I disagree on many, many things, but that's never stopped us from enjoying each other's company, often and preferably with a pint each to lubricate our heated loquacity. We had so much fun talking about the church we love we took to inviting others to join us—monthly at a restaurant for a meal and a lot of talk. We asked friends and asked them to ask their friends. We traded war stories, argued (discussed!) theology, worked through practical issues and laughed a lot.

As a liberal I'm very critical of the smugness of liberals. As a liberal I'm also critical of the holier-than-thouness of evangelicals. Both these poses drive me absolutely batty; the intractability of ideology that leaves behind love and community and grace. There is neither God, Jesus nor Christ in the belligerence of ideologues, just a ripped up Bible with verses lost from context.

Yeah, you know what I'm talking about. And that is everybody's anxiety about our annual big tent gathering in Vancouver this month. The *Record*'s editorial attempt—mocked by ideologues—over the past several months has been to encourage conversation. Fred Stewart, the evangelical, in his Renewal column last month echoed much the same; and in a fashion that would be most comfortable for liberals, by providing additional reading material.

The church is not a fortress; it is a garden. The Bible is not a monolith; it is organic, living, breathing text. The life of people matters. We need to listen.

Some letter writers have asked why we haven't published profiles of homosexual members of our denomination. Why? Because many of them do not want to be exposed to holier-than-thou, biblically-justified critique; some (many!) are equally tired of the bland liberal embrace of "otherness." They have lived, many of them, long-serving lives within the church, supported by some, rejected by others. They love the church but they are often wary, some downright afraid, or at the very least tired and exhausted, by the gaze. Many have found a balance within their church community; they don't want to be icons or examples. They want to be people, not things.

They don't want to be seen as "the gay" but as a person; the way a heterosexual person is allowed to be a person.

Though—warning: attempt at humour here—I'm not totally averse to labelling if we honestly open it up. If Bob, let's call him that, is "the gay guy," I think Sam should be known by his prominent trait which everybody refers to behind his back, as "the bitter jerk." Or, Joan, the ever-busy, glory-stained, micro-manager, as "the petty conscience."

As one who has a small amount of sway over the editorial content of this magazine, I welcome your self-reflective, honest profiles under these truthful titles. If we get enough, who knows? We might even include a gay guy or gal.

I am looking forward to several days in Vancouver for the same reason I look forward to every General Assembly: I love a big party. I love hanging out with friends, old, new, and those I've just met. I love listening to stories and I love sharing jokes. And for 10 years in a row I've always been impressed by the level of spiritually rich thoughtfulness that goes into the debate and conversations on the assembly floor. The results don't always reflect that thoughtfulness, and some of those debates get very weird (ask a GA veteran about the Moderatorial Stole). Still, we are a thoughtful people, we are a faithful people, and we do hold Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, with a sincerity that recognizes we need grace to get by.

I'm pretty sure that's true; and I think Fred does as well. That's why we manage to be such disagreeing friends.

Andrew Faiz is the Record's *senior editor.*

BULLETIN

Community and World News

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Two Dozen Overtures on Sexuality

Overwhelming volume of recommendations to General Assembly is unprecedented.

By Andrew Faiz

Eighteen sessions and six presbyteries have filed overtures for discussion at this year's General Assembly on the issue of human sexuality. This volume of response is without precedence in the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

"I went through the Acts and Proceedings from 1960 to 1966, the years before the ordination of women was approved," Rev. Stephen Kendall told the *Record*. "There were three overtures on that issue."

Kendall is principal clerk of the General Assembly. He said there are usually about a dozen overtures to assembly each year; this year there were 37, including the 24 on human sexuality.

The overwhelming response has prompted Kendall and his team at the clerk's office to proceed a little differently from previous years. All of the referred overtures have been sent to the Committee on Church Doctrine and to Justice Ministries for review, so they can prepare themselves for the inevitable debate. (Referred overtures are the ones filed before Feb. 1st, 2015. Those filed after that date but before April 1st are called unreferred. These overtures will be forwarded by the Bills and Overtures Committee of General Assembly to the assembly itself and possibly on to the same two committees.)

Three Presbyterian educators—Dale Woods, principal of Presbyterian College, Montreal; Patricia Dutcher-Walls, professor of the Hebrew Bible, Vancouver School of Theology; and, Kevin Livingston, associate professor of pastoral ministry, Tyndale Seminary, Toronto—have been asked to prepare a facilitation process on human sexuality. Time on the assembly agenda has been designated for these ›

GENERAL ASSEMBLY, continued

discussions. "Assembly should be a safe place for conversation," said Kendall. Several blocks of time have been allotted to ensure voices are heard and ideas are shared.

"Assemblies are places of discernment and when we're actually there together we will have the opportunity to do just that."

While the tone of the overtures may differ depending on the session or presbytery, the majority fall into two broad camps: "Continue ... to uphold our historic and biblical stance ..." Or, "[be] fully inclusive of every person ..."

Five overtures are filed under the title, "Full inclusion in the church of all persons regardless of sex orientation and gender identity." The recommendation from the Presbytery of East Toronto, which is similar to the others, asks the assembly, "to prepare through the Life and Mission Agency of the General Assembly, in consultation with Justice Ministries a declaratory statement for the General Assembly that affirms that The Presbyterian Church in Canada is fully inclusive of every person regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity in all aspects of church life, including calling, designation, ordination, and marriage equality as a matter of justice and hospitality."

Twelve overtures referenced the church's 1994 Statement on Human Sexuality. Similar in wording to each other, these overtures request, "the 141st General Assembly to prepare, through the Committee on Church Doctrine, an appendix to the Statement on Human Sexuality (1994) which affirms the original content/intent of that report, and which addresses current literature on the subject of same-sex intimacy and relationships."

A few of the overtures request a further process of discernment within congregations and presbyteries. The one from the Presbytery of Pickering asks for "General Assembly to engage the church in a fresh round of 'listening' through (a) developing an intentional strategy within the church's congregations and courts where we can share stories and explore the scriptures, and (b) creating a safe space for this sharing by removing any possibility of church discipline for those who come forward with their stories."

Neighbouring Oak Ridges presbytery asks General Assembly to "pursue unity and consensus within the church by encouraging presbyteries to familiarize their congregations with relevant scriptures and the official documents of The Presbyterian Church in Canada pertaining to marriage and sexuality, and to create opportunities for respectful theological dialogue with emphasis placed on points of agreement."

Anticipating a direction which they may find unfavourable, one session overtures the assembly to "consider establishing a means for 'gracious dismissal' of congregations which might in good conscience be unable to accept changes in doctrine or discipline which depart from the historic confessional standards of the church."

There are a dozen overtures on issues other than human sexuality. Three presbyteries are requesting a Native Ministries Endowment Fund. And one requests "a concise statement and explanation of the church's teaching on palliative care, euthanasia and physician assisted death."

There are a dozen overtures on issues other than human sexuality. Three presbyteries are requesting a Native Ministries Endowment Fund

All overtures end with the phrase, "or to do otherwise as the General Assembly, in its wisdom, may deem best," which is an acknowledgment, as Kendall affirms, that the annual gathering is a place of thoughtful reflection and decisions made are of the highest court of the denomination. Technically, only one overture is needed to initiate a process of discernment at General Assembly.

The 141st General Assembly will take place at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, June 4 to 8.

The 455-page assembly book of reports can be found at presbyterian.ca/ga2015. Along with the overtures, it includes all the reports from the various offices, courts and missions of the Presbyterian Church.

Andrew Faiz is the Record's *senior editor.*

FOLLOW US ONLINE!

The *Presbyterian Record* will be posting regular news stories and photographs from the assembly on its main website—**presbyterianrecord.ca**—and Facebook page—**facebook.com/presbyterianrecord**. You can also follow the PCC's coverage at **presbyterian.ca**, and watch a live video feed of the proceedings.

PRESBYTERIANS SUPPORT NEPAL

Two earthquakes hit Nepal within weeks of each other, destroying hundreds of thousands of homes.

PHOTO BY ANTTI HELIN/FCA/ACT ALLIANCE

Just over two weeks after a devastating 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck Nepal on April 25, a second quake, this one with a magnitude of 7.3, hit on May 12.

At press time, more than 8,000 people were confirmed dead and over 250,000 homes had been destroyed. With the region's monsoon season fast approaching, the United Nations and international relief agencies are making urgent appeals for support.

Presbyterian World Service & Development responded through its partnership with ACT Alliance, a coalition of more than 140 churches and faith-based organizations, to provide emergency food, shelter and other items, as well as psychosocial support. Water and sanitation have also been priorities, said Karen Bokma, PWS&D's communications coordinator.

As of May 7, Presbyterians had pitched in $58,000 for PWS&D's work in Nepal. You can donate through your church, online, or by calling 1-800-619-7301 x291. —*CW*

New Appointments Announced at VST

The Vancouver School of Theology, of which St. Andrew's Hall is a part, has appointed three new faculty members.

Rev. Dr. Jason Byassee is the inaugural appointment to the Butler Chair in Homiletics and Biblical Hermeneutics. Byassee studied systematic theology at Davidson College and Duke University, and was most recently senior pastor of Boone United Methodist Church in North Carolina. He is the author of six books including *Trinity: The God We Don't Know*. His primary vocation is to reinvigorate today's church with the best of ancient and contemporary wisdom for creatively faithful living.

Rev. Ray Aldred has been appointed director of VST's Indigenous Studies Program. Aldred is status Cree from Treaty 8 land in Northern Alberta. While pastoring his first church, the First Nations Alliance Church of Regina, Ray served as director of the First Nations Alliance Church of Canada from 1996-2004. He was most recently assistant professor of Theology at Ambrose Seminary in Calgary, Alta. He is the chairperson of Indigenous Pathways, and is also involved in ministry with his wife, Elaine. Together they serve with a ministry called With My People, helping to train facilitators of support groups for people who have suffered abuse.

Rabbi Dr. Laura Duhan Kaplan has been appointed director of Inter-Religious Studies and Professor of Jewish Studies, effective July 1. Duhan Kaplan holds a Ph.D. in Philosophy and Education from Claremont Graduate University, and a graduate diploma in Spiritual Direction from VST. From 1989-2004, she served as professor of philosophy at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Her books include *Philosophy and Everyday Life, and Family Pictures: A Philosopher Explores the Familiar*. She received the Carnegie Foundation's U.S. Professor of the Year award, and from 2005-2014, served as Rabbi at Or Shalom Synagogue in Vancouver. —*VST*

Church of England Divests from Oil Sands

The Church of England is selling off £12 million worth of investments (about $22.5 million Canadian) in companies that draw more than 10 per cent of their revenues from oil sands and thermal coal extraction.

Most of the world's oil sands developments are in Alberta, where about 1.9 million barrels of oil are extracted daily.

The move by the Anglican denomination is fueled by concerns about climate change, an issue the Bishop of Salisbury, Nick Holtam, called the "the most pressing moral issue in our world."

In an investment policy released on April 30, the church's Ethical Investment Advisory Group and three national investing bodies outlined a strategy focused on "assisting the transition to a low carbon economy."

The church will therefore eliminate its investments in "companies in the fossil fuel sector specializing in activities associated with the highest carbon emissions—the extraction of thermal coal and oil sands."

Selling £12 million worth of investments within an overall portfolio of about £8 billion is "not necessarily [about] the financial amount, but it did make a statement," said Tim Herron, convener of the Presbyterian Church in Canada's Trustee Board. "I think you're starting to see a trend through proxy voting, through activism, through the different institutional investors out there of coming forward with these concerns."

To learn how the PCC is involved in corporate responsibility initiatives, visit presbyterian.ca/justice/csr. —*CW*

Rev. Stephen Kendall (centre, in red) was in Geneva for an annual meeting of the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Officers Network from April 28-May 1. Kendall serves as principal clerk of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

PHOTO BY ALBIN HILLERT/WCC

SPEAKING TOUR SHARES SUCCESSES IN MALAWI

A pair of project staff from Malawi visited the East Coast and Ontario in April, sharing information about a Canadian-supported project in their country and learning about Canadian farming.

Laifolo Dakishoni, accountant and acting project coordinator, and Rogers Msachi, a farmer and community promoter for the Ekwendeni area, spoke about the Malawi Farmer-to-Farmer Agroecology Project, an initiative that teaches farming families how to better manage soil, diversify crops and improve child nutrition, and helps develop local food markets to improve food security and provide income for farmers.

The trip was sponsored by Presbyterian World Service & Development and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, two of the project's major supporters. The five-week trip took Dakishoni and Msachi to southern Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

"It's always very useful to let our community hear firsthand the impact of the work that we do overseas," said Brenda Leenders, who serves as regional co-coordinator of CFGB in Nova Scotia with her husband, Ian McHattie. "To have the farmers and those involved in administering the program share what they're doing and answer questions and share their story—specifically about how when the project started, the Presbyterian hospital had a child nutrition wing that regularly had 100 to 150 kids. Since the project has been running, the impact is they have closed that wing. So to hear stories like that really affirms for the community that the work we're doing is valuable and has an impact and is long-term."

The five-year farmer-to-farmer project, which runs in Mzimba District in the north of Malawi and Dedza District in the central region, was launched in 2012 by Ekwendeni Hospital in collaboration with PWS&D, CFGB and four universities.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada has long-standing partnerships in Malawi. —*CW*

Faith.

Deepening your relationship with God

LEADERSHIFT

Throwback Sundays

The limits of suspicion and the necessity of grace.

By Ross Lockhart

I have a confession. I love "Throwback Thursdays" on Facebook. The concept is simple: Post a "retro" photo of yourself or someone you know and delight in how much has changed. Be prepared, however, to take some good-natured ribbing about how you looked so long ago; anything from culture (huge cell phones) to fashion (1980s zipper pants) to outrageous hairdos (almost always a mistake!). Throwback Thursdays are a delightful way to reflect on how much has changed over the years.

I've wondered lately, however, whether in our leadership preparation for Christ's Church we are in danger ›

LEADERSHIFT, continued

of creating TBS, Throwback Sundays. From coast to coast it is obvious that the 1950s are long gone—back when the fumes of Christendom used the culture and social norms to encourage people's participation in local mainline churches. Today, when no one is socially compelled to be involved in a worshipping community, we talk about innovative, emerging and missional leadership in the church, but I worry sometimes that we are still too often preparing people for TBS, Throwback Sundays.

For example, I have heard it said that the way we teach the Bible, whether in seminary on a Tuesday morning or a church parlour on a Wednesday night, is primarily an attempt to break down a pre-critical understanding of scripture. In other words, to borrow from the teaching of Paul Ricoeur, one of today's best-loved hermeneutical theorists, what we need to do is to take people from their "first naiveté" through "critical reflection" to a "second naiveté." Now, to be honest, I love this language. As someone who strives to help form "scholarly evangelists" for Christ's church, I've been using Ricoeur's three steps for years in teaching and preaching. The challenge is the assumption some people make regarding the first naiveté that is found today in post-Christendom Canada. For a long time now in seminary, the assumption has been that leaders should assume that the first naiveté is a dogged, uncritical biblical literalism. The educator's role, therefore, was to break that "naive" viewpoint in order to lead people (and their worshipping communities) to a more nuanced and historical-critical understanding of the Bible. I get that.

The "hermeneutics of suspicion" have brought us a long way from the naiveté of the old days. But after pastoring growing congregations across our post-Christendom country, I've found that the first naiveté is no longer biblical literalism. Most pre-Christian people I interact with at the coffee shop, gym or campus express a first naiveté that lacks any authority for scripture whatsoever. When I look at the world that will soon be in the hands of my own greying and aging Gen-X as well as the spunky, emerging Millennials, there is an absence of biblical literalism and an abundance of non-critical biblical skepticism in the Canadian landscape.

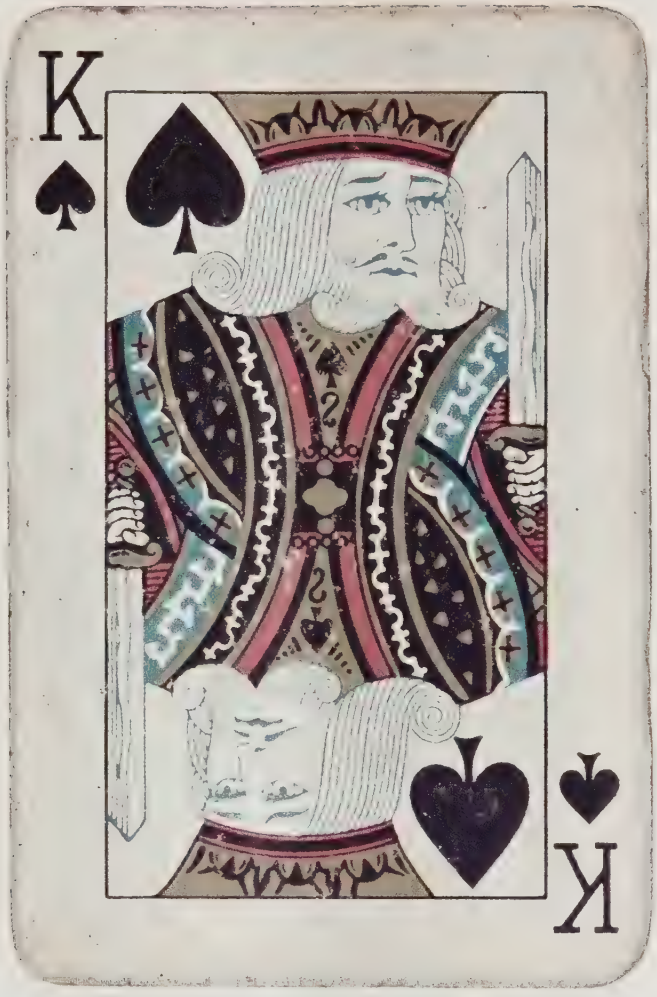
I worry that, over time, we in the mainline churches have lost more than our biblical literacy; we've lost our trust that the Triune God can and does speak to us through scripture

And it's not just in the world around us; it also lurks quietly in the church. The hermeneutics of suspicion require no fertilizer in a postmodern, post-Christendom world—it grows like moss beneath humanity's feet, leaving an agnostic odor at best, and detached, cold, "country club" civil religion at its worst.

Ironically, we live in a time when we know more and less about the Bible. Today's scholars offer us wonderful tools to study scripture, from source criticism to feminist and liberationist approaches. Yet the result has often been that people in the church feel better informed but further away from the Bible. It's like a car that was once easy to repair on our own but now needs a specialist to run fancy diagnostic tests to fix the transmission or change the oil.

I worry that, over time, we in the mainline churches have lost more than our biblical literacy; we've lost our trust that the Triune God can and does speak to us through scripture. That's why I've always loved the prayer for illumination in our Reformed tradition that is shared before reading the Bible in public worship—the acknowledgment that anyone can read the Bible, but to truly understand God's wisdom, we need the help of the Holy Spirit. It's a gentle nod towards our longing for Calvin's teaching that we require the inward witness of the Holy Spirit to understand the Bible. Don't get me wrong, I love the benefits that the hermeneutics of suspicion have brought us by raising awareness of things like patriarchy in the cultures in which the Bible was written. But I worry that we have become so suspicious that we no longer live in expectation of revelation when we approach the word of God. I don't want to send our teaching and ruling elders out into the world Christ died to save with a "TBS" approach to sharing the good news. In post-Christendom Canada, our leadershift should include an equal dose of a hermeneutics of grace. Zipper pants and mesh shirts were great for the '80s, but our sovereign God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit goes ahead and invites us to follow. A pillar of cloud by day, a pillar of fire by night. Be not afraid.

Ross Lockhart is director of ministry leadership and education at St. Andrew's Hall, VST.



ISTOCK

PROGRESSIVE LECTIONARY

Who Wants a King?

At a crucial time in history, God's people need to be careful what they ask for.

By Laurence DeWolfe

Second Sunday after Pentecost
June 7, 2015
1 Samuel 8:4-11, (12-15), 16-20, (11:14-15)

On this first Sunday in June we start hopping through a crucial period in Israel's history. The lectionary allows us to meet Samuel, Saul, David, Goliath, the troubling Philistines, and the troubled people of Israel. Read the books of Samuel and make your own choices. Some things the lectionary leaves out are important. Keep all the parts of today's reading together and don't ignore the narrative frame around it.

Today's story is strange. The people want a king. Everyone else has a king! God doesn't want them to have a king. Neither does Samuel. The people insist. God and Samuel give in. "OK. You want a king? ›

PROGRESSIVE LECTIONARY, continued

Today's story warns us against offering unquestioning allegiance to any authority in this world. That includes those ordained by God. We're called to be respectful, informed critics

You'll have one! But watch out!" Samuel spells out what a king will do. How a king will rule. He will behave as every absolute monarch, every dictator—even those elected by their people—has behaved since. If that's what they want, that's what they will get. And that's what they want.

Next Sunday we'll hear how God regrets letting them have their way. For now God allows Samuel to go with the people to Gilgal to find and crown Saul king. What are Saul's qualifications? In Chapter 9 we learn he is the tallest, handsomest man in Israel. He'll look good in a crown. He'll also be good at the head of an army. Saul receives some of God's anointing Spirit. Just enough to get him started in his tumultuous reign. Samuel makes sure all is done decently and in order. He is God's prophet and priest. Saul goes on to ignore Samuel and trust in his own wisdom and might.

Things do not go well for Saul, or for Israel.

In our Reformed tradition we've always believed that there is such a thing as rightful, even potentially righteous civil authority in this world. A leader can do God's will for the good of all God's people. A leader can also do what Samuel warned a king would do, and worse. The church must keep careful watch over the powerful and not be ashamed to support or afraid to pronounce God's judgment on them. John Knox wanted to go further. He stood alone in his belief that judgment justified execution of an unrighteous king or queen! Knox and old Samuel had a lot in common.

Today's story warns us against offering unquestioning allegiance to any authority in this world. That includes those ordained by God. We're called to be respectful, informed critics. Always constructive critics. But always clear in our advocacy for the vision and values of God's kingdom. It's not enough to stand back and be satisfied our vision and values are recognized when councils pray before meetings. It's no offense to us if an assembly takes an old cross out of its meeting room. It is our place to be present and visible where decisions are made that shape our communal life. It's our call to be audible among the competing voices that seek to influence decision making. Some of those voices proclaim what we don't believe is gospel.

As Samuel saw it, Israel got the king it deserved. It seems God saw it that way, at least for a little while. In a democracy we get the government we deserve. If we don't participate in the process, if we don't do our homework before we vote, if we hold party lines as if our lives depend on it, if we're naive enough to think things always work out for good in a democracy, we deserve what we get. We have freedom others in this world envy. We may not be able to influence God as successfully as Israel did long ago, but we can use the power we have as God's gift for the good of all.

Rev. Dr. Laurence DeWolfe teaches at Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax.

ISTOCK

RENEWAL

Pastoring Our Leaders

Encouragement along the way. By Fred Stewart

A year ago, in the June *Record*, I shared about the 2014 Encouragement Road Trip I took through Western Canada. Because the trip was so well received and because the support of individuals and churches exceeded the expenses by a good margin, I floated the idea of a trip east this year. The response was immediate and positive. Within weeks all the finances were in place as well as a good start in requests for meetings and meet-ups along the way. ›

RENEWAL, continued

As I write this, I am halfway through the 2015 Encouragement Road Trip. What a privilege and honour to be able to minister in this way. Already I have experienced great hospitality, quite varied ministry and extensive opportunities to speak words of encouragement to ministers, their families and their congregations.

Much of it seems like a blur as I have visited in six provinces in the past 11 days. However, there is a recurring theme that is consistent with my experience everywhere in the denomination. There is a pattern of isolation, discouragement, anxiety and evidence of burnout coming from many of our ministers. My prayer is that the words of encouragement I bring and the opportunity for them to unload their hearts in a personal and confidential way helps in some measure to ease their burdens.

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But I discovered something unexpected this trip. The Presbytery of P.E.I. has taken a most positive step in dealing with these issues. With support of the synod, who had encouraged presbytery projects with unused synod staff funds, they have implemented a part-time leadership pastor position. The intention is to provide much needed ministry to the ministers.

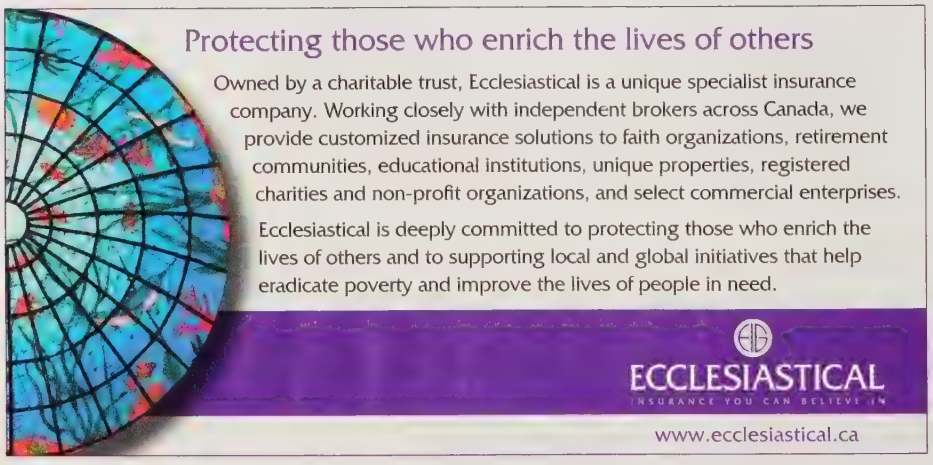
Since November 2014, Rev. Andrew Hutchinson, a local retired minister, has filled this role. He reports a significant number of ministers are taking advantage of his availability. He attributes this to his neutral role in presbytery, the uncompromising confidentiality he promises and the palpable hunger for collegial connection.

Andrew reports that he is pleased with the progress to date and presbytery has also expressed confidence and approval of the program so far. His vision is to be a catalyst to create much more significant collegial interaction between presbytery members. While this will take consistent effort and initiative, Andrew sees the benefits far outweighing the investment.

When I asked if he recommended this approach for others he was unqualified in his response. So, I hope and pray that sharing this with my readers will spark some ideas and actions in other synods and presbyteries. I would certainly offer our resources to help coordinate an event to share needs and approaches so that others can benefit from what has already been learned.

And as I have said before, please remember to pray for all our ministers and leaders.

Rev. Fred Stewart is executive director of the Renewal Fellowship, and minister at St. Andrew's, Bolsover, and Woodville Community Churches.



ISTOCK

ORDINARY RADICAL

A Heavy Burden

Forgetting to ask what God wants. By Amy MacLachlan

We're at the halfway point for this column, halfway on this year-long journey to becoming an "ordinary radical." We've thought about several topics since beginning in January—examining our connection to "stuff" and purging and donating in an effort to curb that connection; figuring out how to "do small things with great love;" meeting people—those we typically think of as recipients of our charity—face to face and allowing those encounters ›

ORDINARY RADICAL, continued

JUNE'S CHALLENGE

Silence

This month, try to take some time away from your regular life to be with God. Be still, be quiet, be ready to listen. "Here we sit our souls down and wait for that which comes from beyond ourselves. Here we give in to desperation and desire until God comes to us and does for us what we cannot do for ourselves" (Barton, *Invitation to Solitude and Silence*). If you would like to do more reading on spiritual disciplines, read Rev. Phil Reinders' award-winning column from 2014 on the *Record*'s website.

to change us; and exploring the idea of justice and how we can live lives that cultivate it, rather than hinder it.

But as I read my previous columns and reflect on where to go next, what I've noticed lately is a lament (particularly on the blog) of how I haven't found time to do the things I've wanted; of how this is tough work; of how I feel somewhat paralyzed at times, discouraged and unsure of how or what to pursue further.

And then it dawned on me. All along, I have left something out; the magical, mystical, most important ingredient on this journey—God.

Seeking God's will and word through a process of quiet discernment is something the *Record*'s editor and publisher, David Harris talks about in his editorial this month. Seeking God's leadership in everything from our life's calling to an important decision should be the first thing we do as Christians, but often, it's something that is forgotten (or simply never gotten around to).

David and I (along with the *Record*'s senior editor, Andrew Faiz) recently chatted about discernment and spiritual guidance over coffee in a hotel restaurant. We weren't talking about my column, but about life in general; a life filled with work and church and family and volunteering and commitments and over-scheduling and conflict and challenges—and the need for solitude and silence amidst such chaos and busyness. A long talk with my minister discussed much of the same; that even our prayers are so often filled with us talking, talking, talking, that we forget, or are unable, to listen. That amidst all the noise and questions and uncertainties and confusion, we can't hear God's still, small voice.

I've just begun reading *Invitation to Solitude and Silence* by Ruth Haley Barton. In it, she says taking time for solitude goes beyond the idea of simply getting away from it all. "Solitude and silence are not self-indulgent exercises for times when an overcrowded soul needs a little time to itself. Rather, they are concrete ways of opening to the presence of God beyond human effort and beyond the human constructs that cannot fully contain the Divine."

I think the restlessness, the despondence, the frustration I've been feeling with this column and blog of late (and in many ways, life in general) likely comes from too much trying to figure this out on my own. Too much of what I think, what I want, what I think I should do. Scrambling each month to try a million different things (and feeling hopeless when the list doesn't get checked off), instead of waiting to hear where God is leading me.

Now none of this means my quest for how to be an ordinary radical as a suburban mom with a young family has come to a close; on the contrary, it feels like it's beginning again. Beginning where it should have started in the first place.

I'm still using Shane Claiborne's works and words as a guide; a very useful map and aid to help tackle serious questions about life and faith and service and community that we all should be asking ourselves as Christians. So what does Claiborne have to say about discerning God's will for this work?

In *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals*, Claiborne references Augustine of Hippo who said, "Let us leave a little room for reflection in our lives, room too for silence. Let us look within ourselves and see whether there is some delightful hidden place inside where we can be free of noise and argument. Let us hear the Word of God in stillness and perhaps we will then come to understand it."

I love this image—a "delightful hidden place inside" that is free of noise. It seems too good to be true.

Claiborne takes things a step further, suggesting that the voice of God can be found in unexpected places if we quiet ourselves long enough to notice.

"There is a beautiful moment in the Bible when the prophet Elijah feels God's presence," writes Claiborne in *The Irresistible Revolution*. "The Scriptures say that a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart, but God was not in the wind. After the wind, there was an earthquake, but God was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. It was the whisper of God. Today we can hear the whisper where we least expect it; in a baby refugee and in a homeless rabbi, in crack addicts and displaced children, in a groaning creation."

It's time to be quiet.

Amy MacLachlan is the Record's *managing editor. Follow her blog at presbyterianrecord.ca.*

Life

Thoughts and inspiration for your daily life

ISTOCK

FAMILY

Shining Some Jesus Light

With a simple prayer.

By Maggie Patterson

After attending a church leadership training session on a Saturday, I had been pondering, "What do I really want? What's my personal mission statement?" On the way to pick up two of my great-grandkids for church the next day, I came up with, "To be a light to my kids so that ›

FAMILY, continued

After we finished, I asked the kids if they knew what the song meant. They didn't so I explained that when we have Jesus inside of us, he shines like a light so that others can see him in us

they can know Jesus."

After church—after asking Pastor Brad if we could get gumballs out of his office, and getting gumballs out of the machine in Pastor Brad's office, and Kyrie and friend Noah explaining how the gumball machine works—and getting the boots on, and taking the boots off to put the socks on, and then putting the boots on and then the coats and getting in the car and doing up the seat belts—we were finally on our way to the Burger King by Addy's house—not the one by the McDonald's but the one by Addy's house—for lunch.

I seldom drive on the expressway with the kids, too many distractions, but I decided to make an exception since it had taken us so long to get into the car in the first place, and Addy had a birthday party to go to later in the day. As we were passing the church, Addy asked if it was her church. I told her it was and asked what she had learned in her Kids' Cove small group that day.

She said, "We sang *This Little Light of Mine*. Can we sing it now?" So we did, with Kyrie correcting us along the way.

After we finished, I asked the kids if they knew what the song meant. They didn't so I explained that when we have Jesus inside of us, he shines like a light so that others can see him in us.

Addy then asked if you could see Jesus inside of you and wondered, "If you went to the doctor so he could look at your skeleton, would Jesus show up in the picture?"

Trying not to chuckle, I said I didn't know.

Addy emphatically responded, "I'll ask Pastor Brad. He'll know for sure." Then she asked a crucial question. "How do you get Jesus inside of you?"

Using the language that we use in our children's ministry, I explained that it was as simple as asking him to be your forever friend and coming to live in your heart.

"How do you do that, Grandma?"

"By simply praying a prayer," I replied.

"Hey, Kyrie, we should do that! Do you want to do that, Kyrie? Grandma, can we do that?"

So while barreling down the expressway at 100 km per hour, with Addy's little head bowed and her hands folded in prayer in the backseat, we prayed that simple prayer with Addy repeating the words as I said them.

Kyrie chimed in with a hearty "Amen ... hey, that's where Uncle Rob works, can we sing *The Muffin Man*?"

And so the crucial conversation and simple prayer were followed by *Do You Know the Muffin Man*? And we went to lunch at Burger King—the one by Addy's house, not the one by McDonald's but the one by Addy's house.

Maggie Patterson is a member at Lakeshore St. Andrew's, Tecumseh, Ont.

SUMMER READING

Stories of Survival

Do you believe in angels? By Laura Sharp

The Angel Effect: We Are Never Alone
John Geiger
Harper Collins, 2013

Angels are mentioned more than 270 times in the Bible; yet, they tend to get short shrift in many Presbyterian congregations and homes.

We read scripture passages about angels, we sing hymns about angels, and we delight as our own little cherubs dress up as angels for Christmas pageants.

Despite this, we don't often discuss angels or whether they play an active role in our lives.

Do angels intervene during times of tremendous crisis? Or, are encounters with "guardian angels" simply neurological responses to extreme distress? These topics are examined in John Geiger's compelling book, *The Angel Effect*.

Geiger first explored the topic of unseen presences in his best-selling book, *The Third Man Factor: Surviving the Impossible*. The book investigated a phenomenon experienced by explorers and mountain climbers: a benevolent "third man" mysteriously appears during life-or-death situations and encourages individuals to survive. After the book's publication, Geiger was flooded with first-hand accounts of guardian angels and otherworldly presences. At the same time, Geiger experienced his own spiritual encounter as he mourned the loss of his infant son. Intrigued, he compiled testimonies about "the angel effect" and researched possible scientific rationales ›

behind such experiences.

The Angel Effect contains remarkable stories of survival, each featuring the presence of a supernatural being that made the difference between life and death. Geiger's subjects describe how guardian angels, spiritual beings, or the voice of God saved their lives during car accidents, violent assaults, genocide, plane crashes, and other traumatic situations.

He follows up each story with a scientific theory that may explain why a benevolent presence was sensed. Messianic ecology, externalized second self and right hemispheric intrusions and other neurological conditions could explain why so many individuals feel an angelic presence is guiding them during times of crisis.

And yet...

How to explain that a being wholly created within the mind is able to offer life-saving advice? If these benevolent beings are neurological in nature, why are so many people convinced they have been in the presence of a power much, much greater than themselves?

Almost every person Geiger interviewed described overwhelming feelings of comfort and love during terrifying ordeals. Most define their encounter as a turning point in their lives. In one case, the survivor of a brutal assault says, "I would prefer to endure the awful experience I went through in order to live my life with the spiritual awareness I gleaned from the encounter."

Is it possible to reconcile such powerful emotions with an event conjured up by our minds? Or, could it be that our Creator is using the wiring of our brains to communicate with us exactly when we most need to hear from Him?

For Christians, perhaps the most fascinating theory Geiger explores is that we can train ourselves to experience the angel effect. Human history is rife with stories about spirit quests, meditation, fasting, and other rituals used to summon spiritual beings. Geiger writes of early Christian ascetics whose practices were designed to focus their minds, overcome physical needs, and bring them closer to God. Geiger discusses the modern Christian practice of "centring prayer." Adherents of this movement believe we can use such prayers to experience God in profound yet subtle ways.

The Angel Effect is a compelling read. The book stays with you long after you have closed its pages. Reading the personal accounts in this book raises many questions. Why are some blessed with a life-saving encounter, while others perish? Are we surrounded by a host of angels who can intervene in our lives for good? If so, can we train ourselves to be more aware of their presence?

The Angel Effect makes it clear that angels should not be confined to ancient Bible stories, hymns or Christmas pageants. They should inspire profound discussions about God in our families, our communities and in our churches.

Have you experienced the "angel effect?" Write a letter or share your stories at presbyterianrecord.ca!

Laura Sharp is a wife, a mother and an avid reader. She lives in Oakville, Ont.

ISTOCK

SUMMER READING

Hanging onto Hope

Confronting gender inequality and discrimination.

By Anne Saunders

One Hour in Paris: A True Story of Rape and Recovery
Karyn L. Freeman
University of Chicago Press, 2014

Karyn Freeman's book made me understand how fortunate I am to have escaped being raped.

Her statistics are startling: One in three women worldwide are raped in their lifetime, or one every 10 seconds. "In Canada half the female population has experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16, and each week one to two women are murdered by a current or former partner." Aboriginal women in Canada, as media headlines remind us, are much more vulnerable than non-Aboriginal women. Even worse is that these statistics are probably conservative, as sexual violence is widely underreported.

The survivors of sexual violence often don't talk about it; there is pressure not to. Speaking out brings shame and blame. As Freeman points out, if we grow up believing the world is basically safe—which we do in Canada—rape becomes more of a personal problem, the survivor's fault, the result of bad choices, to be privately dealt with. Consequently, rape is not seen for what it is: a symptom of societal gender inequality and discrimination.

Freeman's rape experience, recounted in the ›

SUMMER READING, continued

Participation in workshops on gender issues gives men new insight on how their behaviour and notions of masculinity contribute to the spread of HIV among women and to the violation of women's rights

book, is unforgettable. Thinking back to myself at her age, I realize it is by chance that I was spared. There was the first date when the guy took me back to an apartment full of his male friends; there was my own trip through Europe, frequently hitchhiking. Freeman was probably more careful in her travels to Paris than I ever was in Europe. Perhaps the '70s were safer than the '90s, but no woman should have to live wary and in fear of rape. Yet we do and with good reason.

One Hour in Paris is a well-told story by a bright and articulate Canadian woman. Her rape story appears at the outset; the rest of the book is about her recovery, about what worked and what didn't as she tried to get on with her life, and about surviving trauma. In describing her symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, Freeman provides a history of the recognition of this disorder by the psychiatric profession, and describes the challenges of dealing with PTSD.

Freeman's journey to healing took her not only back to the scene of the crime in Paris, but also to Africa—"to see ground zero in the war against women." She informs the reader about the vulnerability of African women, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo where rape is a weapon of war. Having learned how sexual violence and gender inequalities have contributed to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, she wanted to meet survivors of extreme sexual violence and discrimination—women who were strong and brave enough to advocate for change.

Stories of rape are not unusual, but Freeman's thoughtful, well-researched retelling is unique. It is a book that is hard to put down. It informs and it inspires. And it has a happy ending—at least as happy as one could hope for a woman who has survived rape.

Christians are called to speak and act—to no longer remain silent or accept sexual violence. We can speak out, help change entrenched attitudes, and provide practical care for survivors. Through Presbyterian ministries of mission, development, justice and advocacy, we are changing women's lives.

Women like Jan. (All names have been changed.) Raped at 16, Jan had turned to prostitution and drugs and eventually tried to take her own life. Her parents were residential school survivors who lost their language, culture and self-esteem as children. Without their own parents as role models, they did their best raising children in a community still impacted by colonization and racism. But one day Jan walked into the downtown native ministries centre, and her life changed. She now has custody of her children, is mentoring Aboriginal teens at the centre, and becoming a leader in her church. The Presbyterian Church partners with several inner-city programs dedicated to Aboriginal ministries in Edmonton, Saskatoon, Winnipeg and Kenora, Ont.

Women like Abby. Emotionally abused as a child, Abby dropped out of school at 13. She turned to prostitution and substance abuse, was raped by bad dates, beaten by her pimp, and was shuttled around the country depending on major events (such as the Olympics or PanAm Games). On the streets she met an ARISE Ministry worker who treated her with respect. Many months and meetings later, Abby is now in college. What made the difference? "Knowing that I could come here," she said to the ARISE worker, "and tell you anything and know that no matter what, you believed in me." ARISE Ministry is supported through Canadian Ministries and the Presbytery of East Toronto.

And let's not forget that men play an important role in creating change when it comes to gender-based violence. PWS&D supports a project that provides gender and HIV/AIDS training, resources and support to partners in Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi and South Africa. Stigma still exists for people with HIV and AIDS, but through the program, more and more HIV-positive men are "going public" and becoming leaders of the local AIDS outreach groups. Participation in workshops on gender issues gives men new insight on how their behaviour and notions of masculinity contribute to the spread of HIV among women and to the violation of women's rights.

"We face a formidable challenge," writes Freeman, "and the social, economic, political, and educational changes that are needed to bring about social justice therefore requires political will of the strongest order, exercised not only by governments but also by citizens, including those who stand to lose privileges as a result."

Anne Saunders is program coordinator for Canadian Ministries.

ISTOCK

BE CHURCH

Sharing Struggles and Joys

Two denominations, one faith. By Jeff Loach

It was a unique gathering this January at St. John's Church, Bradford, Ont. Members of the Presbytery of Oak Ridges and the northern portion of Classis Toronto of the Christian Reformed Church in North America gathered for fellowship, a meal and common worship—just because.

After all, we are related, sort of: birthed in Calvin's Geneva, both of us Reformed, we express our faith in different ways, one from a Scottish tradition, the other Dutch. (Interestingly, neither denomination in Canada can claim sole membership from those two countries.) ›

BE CHURCH, continued

The two denominations are related in a more formal agreement as well—in 2009 the PCC and the CRC signed an affirmation of their relationship. That document states: "Both the Presbyterian Church in Canada and the Christian Reformed Church in North America recognize that through this formal statement we are affirming and building upon existing relations with a denomination that shares the Christian faith, a Reformed theological perspective, and a Presbyterian form of church government. Both denominations have strong commitment to mission in Canada and around the world, to evangelism and justice, to a prophetic view of the mission of the church in society; we look forward to developing together new horizons of mission, which respond to Christ's calling to the church today."

Rev. Dr. Daniel Scott, minister at St. John's, Bradford, was involved in the process towards that affirmation, and it was his idea for this informal gathering. During dinner there were further affirmations from both denominations. Rev. Stephen Kendall, principal clerk of the General Assembly, challenged the Presbyterians to quote something from the Heidelberg Catechism, a doctrinal standard for the CRC; and challenged Christian Reformed folks to quote something from the Westminster Confession. The winning ecumenists received mugs commemorating the denominational affirmation.

Though the classis is the political equivalent of our presbytery, its geography is more analogous to our synod: Classis Toronto stretches from its namesake city all the way to Cochrane, Ont., not unlike the Synod of Central, Northeastern Ontario and Bermuda.

Our conversations revealed that many of us share similar struggles and joys: overcoming cultural barriers and declining numbers; delighting in seeing the Holy Spirit at work in congregations

The most enjoyable part of the evening was conversation around the dinner tables. We were set in groups that had an equal number of Presbyterians and Christian Reformed folk at each table. Conversation starters were offered, as well as Scotch mints and those wicked little liquorice gummies that taste like they're full of salt. The Dutch have quite a rite of initiation with those!

Our conversations revealed that many of us share similar struggles and joys: overcoming cultural barriers and declining numbers; delighting in seeing the Holy Spirit at work in congregations. Many were surprised at how much we have in common.

Following the meal, worship was shared, and the Lord's Supper celebrated, with leaders from both denominations participating. Each group then went its own way to have a business meeting.

This is not the first time we've done something like this. In 2011 at the invitation of Rev. Peter Han, minister at Vaughan Community Church in the Presbytery of Eastern Han-Ca, the Presbytery of Oak Ridges shared a fellowship meal and worship with the Korean presbytery. Vaughan Community is within the bounds of Oak Ridges. Our time together felt like a taste of God's eternal kingdom, where worship happens in many languages.

Oak Ridges is the second-youngest presbytery in the PCC—formed in 1993, in the booming bedroom communities north of Toronto. The 1992 Overture to General Assembly proposing the new presbytery stated: "the congregations within and surrounding York Region have been thus affected [by growth and new developments] with the result that new communities and old have a new sense of identity as part of a region." The Presbyteries of Barrie, Pickering, Lindsay-Peterborough, West Toronto and East Toronto each contributed congregations to the new presbytery.

We who are involved in the courts of the church and in our local congregations find it easy to become insular, to think that the entire Church of Jesus Christ looks like and functions just like us. Not so! And spending time with our sisters and brothers from the CRC reminded us of this reality, while at the same time helping us to remember the many aspects of faith that we share in common.

Why not try it in your neck of the woods?

Rev. Dr. Jeff Loach is clerk of the Presbytery of Oak Ridges, and minister at St. Paul's, Nobleton, Ont.

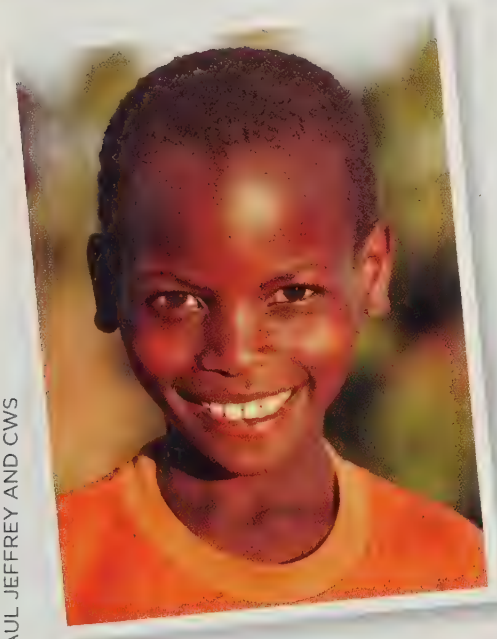
PWS&D IS THE DEVELOPMENT AND RELIEF AGENCY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA

ABRIDGED VERSION

PWSDevelopments

The quarterly newsletter for Presbyterian World Service & Development • 2015 Edition, Issue 2

Abundant life



PHOTOS: PWS&D, PAUL JEFFREY AND CWS

"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

– John 10:10

IN 2014, PWS&D UNDERTOOK AN intensive visioning and strategic planning process. Throughout the process, supporters from across Canada provided insightful feedback and thoughts for the future direction of PWS&D's work.

Throughout the process, PWS&D has reaffirmed our commitment to serving those in need, developed strategies to better address emerging global issues and looked for new ways to strengthen our international programs.

Our plan aims to tap into the enormous potential of individuals and Presbyterian congregations to enact meaningful and sustainable change in the lives of vulnerable people around the world.

This plan forms the basis of our future direction. It outlines our vision, mission, theological foundation, guiding values, and the following program priorities PWS&D will pursue to make this vision a reality.

Livelihoods

Families are empowered through education, skills training and small business development. When one person becomes self-reliant, they are able to shape their own future and lift up others.

Diana is a student in a PWS&D-supported girls' education project in Afghanistan. Not only is she receiving a quality education, but she has also learned skills at school that are helping her earn an income.

"I am very happy and hopeful for my future because my father has advised me to save my income so that I can enrol in university, rather than contributing towards household expenses. My higher education is now ensured, which will help me become a doctor so I may further support my family and community."

Food Security

Communities are learning innovative and sustainable agriculture practices to increase crop yields, improve nutrition and build resilience to environmental changes.

In Tanzania, Juliana used to struggle to grow enough food to sustain her family. Then a conservation agriculture project started in her community. The project aims ▶

Inspired by God's promise of abundant life, PWS&D envisions a sustainable, compassionate and just world.

to improve crop yields while minimizing soil disturbance and using natural fertilizers to protect the environment. Now Juliana feels her family has been liberated. With the new techniques she has learned, she is seeing a large increase in yields, ensuring her family is more able to sustain themselves for the future.

Health

By ensuring mothers and children receive medical care, caring for people affected by HIV and AIDS, and providing basic access to water and sanitation, families and communities are growing healthier.

Maria used to spend over six hours everyday fetching water, and walked over four kilometres in order to access it. If she needed water more quickly, Maria was forced to collect water from unclean sources. Now that a PWS&D water project has repaired her community's well, the situation is much better. "I am very happy now because I have peace of mind. I know that the water that my children are drinking and bathing in is clean—it means they will be sick less often and won't miss school," she shares.

OUR VALUES

COMPASSION

PWS&D walks with distressed and marginalized people, listening carefully to their stories and responding effectively.

JUSTICE

PWS&D works for equality, empowerment, human dignity, peace and stewardship of creation. In solidarity, we affirm that all people are entitled to know their rights, to receive equal protection, and to have access to and control over resources.

PARTNERSHIP

PWS&D believes in dynamic relationships that involve mutual learning, trust and shared vision. Healthy partnerships are accountable, ethical, equitable, flexible and respectful.

Human Rights

Injustices are combated through a shared commitment to human rights. PWS&D promotes and protects the rights of women, children, workers, subsistence farmers, persons with disabilities, and refugees.

Responding to situations where indigenous people in Guatemala are marginalized or denied their basic human rights, PWS&D is educating women about their rights and opportunities. By building self-esteem and leadership qualities, opportunities are created for women like Aurelia who now trains others in her community about their own rights. "I want to continue working with my community to improve conditions—especially for our children, who are our future."

Emergency Relief

In the aftermath of conflict and disaster, immediate and long-term relief ensures vulnerable people and refugees have access to food, shelter and medical attention, and are able to recover from loss and trauma.

Many disasters and emergencies never make the world media headlines, but the needs are no less real and the impacts on families are equally devastating. PWS&D reaches out to the most vulnerable with support that addresses both immediate needs such as food, medical attention and shelter, as well as long-term needs including livelihood recovery and psychosocial assistance to help overcome trauma.

Together, we will work towards lasting solutions to global poverty and build a future of peace, equality and well-being for all creation—abundant life.

Please give

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Focus

Stories of mission, ministry and community

ISTOCK

VISION

Choosing Change

What I am expecting for the future of the church over the next decade.

By W. Scott McAndless

The Presbytery of Waterloo-Wellington is working its way through a visioning process, trying to decide what the priorities of the church will be in the coming decade. As part of this, our facilitator, Rev. Peter Coutts has challenged the members of the presbytery to talk about their expectations for the church in the coming years in an online blog.

Coutts is the general presbyter for the Presbytery of Calgary-Macleod, supporting and coaching 15 congregations and their leadership in southern Alberta. He is also the author of *Choosing Change*. These are my thoughts on Coutts' challenge.

We certainly cannot predict the future as it has a way of surprising us. Nevertheless, as I look forward, I do it with certain expectations. I definitely expect a great deal of change in the coming years—as I have expected ever since I first started my ›

VISION, continued

ministry. One thing that I have seen up to this point is that change never seems to occur as quickly as I expected it to. So I must say, first of all, that I have learned to expect that things will take longer to change than I expect.

CONTEXT

I do not expect that the trends we have seen will change dramatically. Overall membership and attendance will continue to decline. More and more people in society will cease to identify with the Christian faith and with organized religion in general. I don't necessarily see this as a negative trend but it is obviously very challenging to the church and its continued work.

Because of these trends, we are likely to see a number of things develop. We will continue to see national organizational and denominational church structures decline. National church offices, strapped for resources, will be ever more limited in what they can offer to support the ministry and mission of the church which will render them less relevant. Regional bodies, such as synods, will continue to decline in relevance and in the resources they can offer.

These developments don't necessarily distress me. The way I see it, we are in the death throes of a way of doing and being the church that hasn't really been working for a while. Some of that structure likely needs to die in order for there to be a resurrection—a new way of being the church that is truly effective in the world today.

SUNDAY SCHOOLS

I have to say something about the matter of declining Sunday school enrollment. This is a pet peeve of mine. I do not like the hand-wringing often seen over declining Sunday schools. The distress over this fact has an underlying assumption that is dangerous. It is an assumption that we know how Sunday school is supposed to work. Essentially, what we are doing is holding up the model of our church Sunday school programs as they were in the 1960s and '70s when our programs were bursting at the seams. That, we proudly declare, is what a successful Sunday school looks like and that is what we used to be able to do.

But do you know what? I don't really see that as a success. Sure, our programs were full of kids in those times. But do you realize that those were the very kids that we lost when they grew up? That generation, who were kids in the '60s and '70s, dropped out of the church in far greater numbers than any generation before them. If we're going to call that success, then I'm not sure we have a good idea what success is.

I think a little bit of humility is called for. I'm personally very excited about some of the things we are doing in our children's ministries. But that doesn't mean we've got them all right. Nevertheless, there are all kinds of reasons to be hopeful that, with God's help, we will do better with this generation.

CONGREGATIONS

Congregations will continue to be the heart and soul of the church. As larger structures fall away, this will only become more and more true. Yes, we will continue to lose congregations. Some will take longer to die but that has always been the case. Alongside this we will continue to see congregations of various sizes that remain strong and that get stronger. There will be pockets of healthy, vibrant church life spread throughout our presbytery.

We will continue to see, as has been the case for some time now, that it is congregations that are engaged in their community, that are active in local and larger mission, that have excellent leadership and that can communicate the message of the faith in relevant ways that will be strongest. (Although even congregations that do all of this and do it really well are not guaranteed to thrive as there will continue to be economic, demographic and other factors at play.) These healthy and strong congregations will do some really exciting things and will be a joy to their members.

We will likely continue to see that congregations that are strong and vital will seek out the resources they need wherever they can find them. They will not insist on or seek out denominational resources as they have in the past. This will partly be because those resources will not be there, but also because other agencies will be able to adapt to the changing circumstances much more quickly and flexibly.

We will not lose our central focus on essentials of our faith. Jesus Christ will remain our only king and head. We will continue to acknowledge the scriptures as the authoritative witness to the living Word of God. We will still practice sacraments, pray and seek and find God through faith.

But some other things will change. Our churches will likely find the need to set themselves apart in some explicit ways from some of the more extremist Christian faith groups. Our churches are full of people who take a rational and reasonable approach to their faith. Still, radical groups will take control of the Christian agenda on the wider cultural level, which will lead people to assume that such extremist ways of being Christian are the only ways of being Christian. We will increasingly feel the need to set ourselves apart from such assumptions. For me, that means we will need to make a public point of:

- Practicing greater inclusion—finding places for all kinds of people who live and think out their faith differently from us.

- Clearly rejecting anti-science strains of Christianity (e.g. those who reject evolution).
- Promoting ways other than the idea that Jesus suffered in our place in order that we might be forgiven (the Substitutionary Theory of Atonement) to talk about what Jesus has accomplished for us.
- Reading the Bible for what it is—a collection of various kinds of ancient literature. We will need to affirm that one doesn't have to take the Bible literally in order to take it seriously.
- Focusing our Christian life and work on this world and not on another world to come.
- Actively and positively engaging the fastest growing religious group in Canada: atheists.

This is the church that I expect and this is the kind of church that we need the presbytery to support, starting now.

What that means for me is that the presbytery needs to be careful to use its resources (time, talent, energy, financial and real estate assets) very wisely to support the church that will be.

As far as I am concerned:

- There is no point spending our resources on maintaining structures or infrastructures that are dying or becoming irrelevant.
- We need to invest in creating strong, healthy and vibrant congregations, especially in places where circumstances like economics, demographics and other factors are in our favour.
- We need to create and support strong leaders (lay and clergy).

Rev. Scott McAndless is moderator of the Presbytery of Waterloo-Wellington, minister at St. Andrew's, Hespeler, Ont., and author of Caesar's Census, God's Jubilee.

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photos courtesy of the Presbyterian Record

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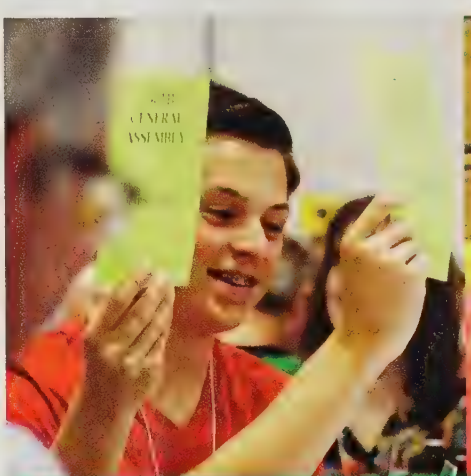

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RESOURCE

Someone To Talk To

Coaching for new church development.

By Tim Archibald

Still wet behind the ears, not yet ordained five years, with little knowledge about growing a brand new congregation, I had said goodbye to a four-point charge in P.E.I. to become a New Church Development (NCD) worker in a fledgling congregation in Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley. Canada Ministries flew me out to Toronto for some orientation. Goodness knows, I needed it! For one week I was given a car, a list of appointments, and the addresses of new congregations around the Greater Toronto Area. Each day I was in a different growing Toronto suburb where I saw very different approaches to outreach, evangelism and growing new congregations. Boy, did I learn. Meeting with Rev. Wes Denyer (who was in Unionville at the time) is when things clicked for me. I heard about his style of NCD and learned about the birth and growth of the Unionville Church. I sensed God saying, "I know you can do this, too." Then Wes gave me his business card, and back I flew to Nova Scotia to grow a new congregation. I was scared, but ready. The thing that helped give me courage was that I had that business card in my wallet. "Whenever you need to talk, just give me a call," Wes had said. And call I did.

That was 20 years ago, in what seems like a different world. Yet one thing that hasn't changed since then is the need, as a new church development worker, to have a number to call when you need to talk, bounce around ideas, or when you're discouraged. Having someone to chat with can be the difference between giving up and moving forward.

The Presbyterian Church (USA) has discovered that the success of these workers increases significantly when they have coaches. In the PC(USA), every grant-receiving NCD is required to have a denominationally-sponsored coach, a program that began in 2002. Each coach is an experienced NCD minister who has received special training in coaching, and coaches not only for the good of the individual, but for the success of the mission.

> We now have five trained NCD coaches who offer coaching in congregations across our denomination

About eight years ago, Canada Ministries partnered with the PC(USA) to begin training PCC ministers as coaches. We now have five trained NCD coaches who offer coaching in congregations across our denomination. Because coaches work with people outside of their own presbytery, the coaching relationship is sustained by Skype calls, usually once a month. The coach will also travel to the new ministry in person for a site visit where she or he will meet with the NCD worker, the elders, presbytery representatives, other paid staff and key leaders in the congregation as well as participate in Sunday worship.

From observations made on the visit and each monthly phone call, the coach offers several things: 12 months of coaching in six key areas of discipleship and faith formation deemed essential for successful NCD work; help with goal setting by regularly asking questions that keep the focus on developing the ministry; "balcony time" for the NCD minister to step out of the fray for a fresh perspective on the work; and an opportunity to discern and clarify why and what the NCD worker needs to do next.

Rev. Heather Melnick, one of our current coaches, remembers many years ago leading Living Faith Church, in the Presbytery of Barrie, through an amalgamation. She says she would have greatly benefited from a coach helping her tend to the many details involved in selling the property, purchasing new property, applying for property zoning changes, dealing with architects and site supervisors, combining the sessions and various ministry teams, preparing for newcomers, and a myriad of other issues. Instead, she handled things largely on her own.

"How helpful it would have been to have someone walk alongside me who had been through a similar situation, who could share in prayer, problems and celebration," said Melnick.

Thankfully, this is now a possibility. The coaching relationship can mean the difference between jumping ship and great success.

To connect with a coach, contact Canadian Ministries at 1-800-619-7301 or imcdonald@presbyterian.ca.

Rev. Dr. Tim Archibald is an NCD coach, and ministers at Kings, New Minas, N.S.

Graduates 2015

Knox College, Toronto

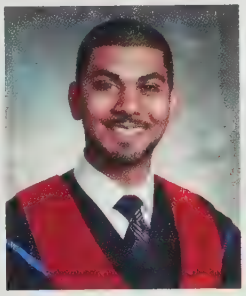
MASTER OF DIVINITY AND THE DIPLOMA OF THE COLLEGE

Seung-Woo Ryan Bak
Trinity, Grenfell, Sask.

Kangeun Jessica Cho
Vaughan Community, Thornhill, Ont.

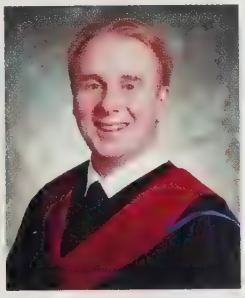
Monica McClure
St. Andrew's, Whitby, Ont.

Maren McLean Persaud
Union, Thorburn, N.S.



Christian Persaud
St. David's, Scarborough, Ont.

Timothy John Reddish
University Community, Windsor, Ont.



Gregory Scott Charles Smith
Knox, Guelph, Ont.

Young Wan Son
Vaughan Community, Thornhill, Ont.

Wayne Corrie Stewart
St. Andrew's, Sydney Mines, N.S.

Eun Suk Oh
London Korean Christian Church, London, Ont.

MASTER OF DIVINITY

Sun Jin Ju
Toronto Church of the Word, Toronto, Ont.

Jaisun Yoo
YoungNak, Toronto, Ont.

SPECIAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY CERTIFICATE

Carluci Ferreira dos Santos
Knox, Toronto, Ont.

MASTER OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Brian William Birdsell
St. Andrew's, Toronto, Ont.

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

Beidy Casas Aragon
Matanzas Central, Cuba

KNOX GRADUATES continue >

MASTER OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

Yoonsuh Kang
Toronto Korean, Toronto, Ont.

Charles Samsoo Kim
University Bible Fellowship, Toronto, Ont.

Jin Seob Kim
St. Timothy, Etobicoke, Ont.

Loys de Fleuriot de La Coliniere
Redhill Church, Milton, Ont.

Kailas Narayan
Queen St. East, Toronto, Ont.

MASTER OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES & SPECIAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY CERTIFICATE

Nelson Imsung Lee
Galilee, Toronto, Ont.

St. Andrew's Hall, Vancouver School of Theology

MASTER OF DIVINITY

Young-Geun Kim
Vancouver Korean

Ashley Tu
Chinese Alliance Church, Vancouver

Curtis Wilson
St. Andrew's & St. Stephen's, North Vancouver

Nam Ok Yoo
Vancouver Korean

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Al Brouwer
Knox, Cranbrook, B.C.

The Presbyterian College, Montreal

Due to unforeseen personal circumstances, all three of Presbyterian College's potential In Ministry Year students had to withdraw from the program. We are looking forward to a good number of graduates for 2016.

Ministers as a Mission Project

Healthier clergy make for healthier congregations.

by Matthew Ruttan

Illustration by Yevgenia Nayberg

Ministers need to make themselves a mission project. Here's why.

In *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix,* rabbi and leadership consultant Edwin Friedman argues that the nature of the leader's presence, their emotional health, and their ability to communicate and take care of themselves is a major factor of influence in any organization.

A healthy pastor can send a ripple effect through the church. So can an unhealthy one. No pressure, right?

Wrong.

WE LIVE IN A TIME OF HIGH ANXIETY FOR CLERGY. There are unhealthy pressures to perpetually perform, please and produce. And in the midst of it all, pastors are called to bring a fresh word from God every week. If you are truly called, there is no calling it in.

Plus, many churches are shrinking and there's confusion about what's happening. At a recent workshop, our synod's congregation consultant John-Peter Smit said: "Thirty years ago there were about nine things you needed to do to grow a church—if you got about five of them right, the church would grow. Now you need to do 11—and your church might still not grow."

There's also momentous cultural change. I think everyone can agree that we're not in Kansas anymore. Mark Twain wrote that to be a pilot one needs to know more than one ought to know, and you have to learn it all over again every 24 hours. That seems to be the case with modern leadership, too.

I'm passionate about this because it's born out of my own story:

Many planets aligned to seemingly eclipse the sun. "I have entered into a dark tunnel." That's what I wrote in my journal several years ago. I was a new minister with a young family, thrown into the rigor of new ministries from youth to seniors; I was trying to deal with diverse theological views, interpersonal conflicts, threats from a few people to leave if such-and-such didn't happen, financial issues, and a host of other emotionally heavy brain-twisters normally reserved for executives at a mid- to large-sized corporation. The near-eclipse resulted in stress, lack of sleep, poor eating, high anxiety and less (quality) family time. I think I had an ulcer.

It happens. And yet we rarely talk about it. Why not? Maybe we think any sickness is spiritual sickness. "Just pray harder." Maybe non-visible illness has too much stigma. Maybe we think leaders should be smile factories. Maybe we're living in the shadow of clergy who sacrificed their families to the gods of 80-hour weeks and no days off. Ever. Somewhere grown children silently weep. In his book *Signature Sins,* Michael Mangis writes, "The human heart is constantly tempted to live under the illusion that things are fine just the way they are."

SO HOW ARE THEY? I was not well and it affected everything—like carbon monoxide quietly contaminating your house. So I made a decision to become crazy-obsessed with getting healthy and back into balance. Things were not "fine." And fine is a far cry from being fully alive for Christ. Thankfully, hunger is the best appetizer. So here's what unfolded:

I accessed the denomination's Employee Assistance Program. A few phone calls helped me better understand what I was going through and what to do next.

I spoke to my doctor and was referred to a good Christian therapist. The word "good" is important. Therapists are like doctors or pastors—some are helpful, some aren't. That was a game changer.

My church set up a human resources team to meet with me (and others) regularly—to listen, to support, to encourage. This wasn't a direct result of my situation, but it was proposed by a wise congregant who knew how vital it was to the church's strength.

I talked with a mentor with whom I could be open and honest—someone who had been down life's roads and could be a practical encouragement.

I became more rooted in prayer and Jesus. "Matthew, you mean pastors don't have everything figured out by the time they're ordained?" Um, no. I've always had a rich devotional life, but I needed to take it much higher, and quickly. It seems humans do have wings—they're called knees. Plus, I developed a relationship with a prayer partner who brought in more conversation and accountability.

I got back into shape. I started running again and developed a personal routine. Three or four times a week I was working out and it had a brain-lifting effect. Literally. It's not always easy, but you have to borrow some wisdom from Nike and just do it. You're only as healthy as you are today.

I became militant about focusing on the pillars in ministry—teaching/communicating, critical pastoral care and overarching vision. I'm still in the nuts and bolts of a few things, but I became more confident in saying "no" to a lot. It's amazing how being more effective at fewer things actually means a net increase in overall effectiveness. (And I also learned that people actually want that.) More time in prayer and priorities forces less important things off your schedule. Hmm.

I made near-concrete parameters around my time use—two days off every week and only one night a week doing "church stuff" (except in emergencies). I realized I was often busy because I was being lazy—not using my valuable time on core priorities, or letting others determine how I should spend that time. So changes happened. Prayer, family and rest are important. Our willingness to rest may be the biggest indicator as to whether we really believe God is God. I slowly reduced my work hours to about 45 a week. (To some of you that will seem like winning the lottery.)

BUT HERE'S THE RUB. When it comes to a pastor's health, usually we're reactive instead of proactive. Can you imagine the impact if that was reversed?

I know it's hard to make changes. But as a mentor told me, "There are no shortcuts to anywhere worth going." I also know that perhaps it was (and is) easier for me because Westminster is pretty healthy and our relationship is largely one of trust and moving forward; that creates a spirit of "yes." But I truly feel that the congregation understands that they're healthier when I'm healthier. And as for me, I can't expect the church to be growing if I'm not.

In his book *Leading in a Culture of Change*, professor of policy studies at the University of Toronto, Michael Fullan writes that it is likely someone who is "committed to certain values, but uncertain of the pathways" who is probably well suited to lead. For ministers, those values should be rooted in the message and mission of the Lord Jesus; the uncertain pathways are whatever lies ahead on our moving cultural landscape. Sounds to me like something we need to train for. Things will get harder, not easier. Ministry will become more distracted, not less. Our anxious climate will get heavier, not lighter.

So no matter who you are, why not join me in becoming near-crazy committed to well-being? But you need to live with eyes wide open. As the saying goes, just because you're not sick doesn't mean you're healthy. Humility and bravery are needed in the pursuit of wellness.

Let's circle back to Friedman who started us off by saying that the nature of the leader's presence, their emotional health, and their ability to communicate and take care of themselves is a major factor of influence in any organization. I think I'm stronger and healthier today than I've ever been. But it's continual work. You never fully arrive at healthy. But the journey is worth it—for Christ, for his kingdom, for me, for my family, and for the church. The good news isn't just something you know—it's someone you are.

Ministers need to make themselves a mission project.

As a friend recently told me, "Anything is possible—it just depends on what you're willing to pay for it."

Rev. Matthew Ruttan is a simplifier, dad-of-three and pastor at Westminster, Barrie, Ont. Sign up for his daily email devotional and blog at matthewruttan.com. One day he hopes to own a rowboat.

A Congregational H.R. Team

Not as strange as it sounds. By Steve Sainsbury

MY FAMILY WAS ALWAYS ON THE MOVE. I have been a member of 17 different congregations over the last 64 years. Why does this matter? The changes I have seen and their impact on church life have been dramatic—secular society, seven-day work weeks, globalization, the list goes on. There is also no sign that this trend is about to change anytime soon. The result has been increased stresses and challenges for the church. At the same time, most congregations' ability to invest in paid staff has gone the other way. This highlights a critical and growing problem.

Who has found themselves at the centre of this storm? The minister. Few would deny that the minister is the emotional and spiritual centre of a congregation. It also means the minister is forced to wear many hats—preacher, pastor, minister, of course, but also administrator, manager, volunteer recruiter, leadership coach, arbitrator, program designer, event coordinator, and the list goes on and on. If this isn't enough of a challenge the minister must also deal with their own personal and family challenges—the demands of their children, personal or spousal illnesses, supporting their aging and ailing parents, conflicts at home/church/with staff. That's a lot of demands, stresses and skill requirements for one human being!

Other church employees are not immune and are caught in this turmoil as well. Without effective strategies to provide workable solutions, the minister has an almost impossible task.

So what can we do to help bridge the gap in at least a few areas? A practical, and I believe effective, part of the solution is to create a congregational human resources team. Here is what it does:

Conducts biannual meetings with church staff. These are individual, confidential meetings where concerns may be brought forward, either from the team or from the church employee. These meetings are for staff to voice their concerns about other employees, individuals associated with the church and/or concerns regarding roles, work-life balance and job fulfilment. The meetings are designed to help staff work through difficult predicaments including personal, family or church related issues.

Provide the session with input and support for areas such as the creation of job descriptions, managing staff time, recognition, compensation, and conflict resolution.

The team itself is made up of two individuals. They need not have a background in human resources although this would be useful. Their core objectives are identifying issues before they become a problem and developing timely and practical resolution strategies. The success of this team is built upon trust and confidentiality. The result should be greater focus and proactive action.

Let me use a fictitious example to illustrate how it works: Your minister is currently working between 70 and 90 hours a week and seldom takes a day off. The number of home visitations requested have doubled in the last two years. People have complained to session that the minister needs to do more. In addition, the youth need a program to help keep them connected to the church. The minister is great with young people and has been approached to start a youth group. The bottom line: the current and future demands on the minister cannot possibly be met. What can she do?

Here is the H.R. team's approach:

After the minister shares the situation, it is the H.R. team's role to help develop concrete actions that help correct the situation.

With the minister, they map out how the current hours are being invested. (Worship, visitation, education, outreach, administration, etc.)

Develop a specific plan with options that reduce the ongoing hours from 90 to 50. Such things as training a lay visitation team, launching an appeal for funds to recruit a part-time youth worker, the elimination of the minister's attendance at non-session committee meetings, moving

Resources to Encourage Healthy Ministers and Congregations

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, 20 per cent of Canadians will personally experience a mental illness, and approximately eight per cent of adults will experience major depression. In 1998, the economic cost of mental illnesses—which can include anxiety disorders, bipolar disorders, schizophrenia, major depression, personality disorders, eating disorders and suicidal behaviour—to Canada's health care system was estimated to be at least $7.9 billion. Many people suffer silently, but there are ways to seek help and support. Here's a list to get you started:

Employee Assistance Program - The PCC's Employee Assistance Program offers "immediate, confidential help for any concern." You can access the short brochure at **presbyterian.ca/mcv** or **call 1-800-387-4765** at any time. If you are overwhelmed or unsure of what to do, this may be a good first step.

Human Resources Team - To learn more about setting up a human resources team at your church, read the article on p. 38 by Steve Sainsbury.

Inter-Mission (Sabbatical) - Consider applying for an "Inter-Mission," a 10-week paid time of renewal to be in touch with the "Holy Other" in our lives. Those who have worked more than five years in the denomination are eligible. To find out more, read the Acts & Proceedings from 1992, p. 383-384.

Christian Nurture - Start to put in place intentional systems for Christian nurturing such as prayer partnerships or mentorships. A succinct introduction to the idea of mentoring can be found by searching for the article "The Company You Keep" (2011) at alban.org.

Therapy - Consult your doctor or a friend or mentor if you feel you need to speak to a therapist. If you are "stuck" or need professional advice to advance along the next steps of mental wellness, engaging in psychotherapy might be wise. Access your benefits package to find out what is covered at **presbyterian.ca/pensionandbenefits.**

Helpful Resources

• To learn more about "finding a balance for effective ministry" see Roy Oswald's ***Clergy Self Care***. Although published in 1991, his self-assessment tools and practical advice about re-framing ministry within healthier parameters are current.

• **The Anxiety & Phobia Workbook** (4th Edition, 2005) by Edmund J. Bourne, Ph.D, is written from a secular perspective and offers practical, step-by-step help to more fully understand anxiety and fear, and what to do about it.

• To better comprehend wider emotional currents and human functioning in a climate of anxiety, read Edwin H. Friedman's ***A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix*** (2007). Friedman was a rabbi and served as a consultant to congregations, synagogues and large companies. This approach to understanding the human condition and how it relates to leadership may be one of the most valuable things you ever read.

• Kristine O'Brien and Sandra Moll wrote an award-winning story for the *Record* back in February 2009, entitled ***Breaking the Silence: The Mental Health of Our Clergy***. Read it at **presbyterianrecord.ca/2009/02/01/breaking-the-silence.**

the responsibility for creating the weekly bulletin from the minister to a volunteer.

The session, armed with a clear understanding of the issues and alternatives, can now make educated decisions about what needs to happen. It is not about getting it 100 per cent right. It is about focus and recognizing the reality of the problem and taking action to solve it.

Steve Sainsbury is the coordinator for the H.R. team at Westminster, Barrie, Ont. He has worked on this process over the last 15 years to meet the needs of three ministers and their teams in two congregations.

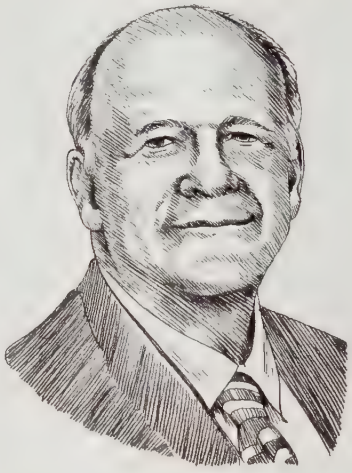
FROM THE MODERATOR

Service and Witness

Reflecting on time spent in Taiwan. By Stephen Farris

My wife Patty and I represented our church at the 150th anniversary of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. The 150 years date from the arrival of English Presbyterian, Dr. James Laidlaw Maxwell, in 1865 in southern Taiwan. In 1871, the redoubtable Dr. George Leslie MacKay (as he spelled the name) of Zorra Township, Ont., began his work in northern Taiwan.

Dr. MacKay is held in the highest respect in Taiwan. His influence on education, health care and, of course, the church itself, cannot be overestimated. The "Black-bearded Barbarian" founded the first medical clinic, which is the ancestor of the present Mackay Memorial group of hospitals, the first institute of western-style higher education in Taiwan, now Alethia University, the first school for girls of any sort and made countless other contributions to the life of the island he loved with passion. He also loved deeply and had a happy marriage with a Taiwanese woman known as "Minnie." Dr. MacKay baptized 6,000 converts and, it is estimated, pulled 21,000 teeth. I was not called on to do either. He also became Moderator of the 20th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada in 1894 and was one of the few Canadians to speak out against the head tax on Chinese immigrants. If you google George Leslie Mackay, (the usual spelling) you will find some fascinating old photos, including an example of early dentistry. You will also understand the nickname!



I used to think when I was younger that when Jesus spoke about 'a cup of cold water in my name,' he was speaking of a trivial gift

The church in Taiwan maintains the missionary zeal of its founders. Professor Yang-En Chen explained that the church invites people into relationship with Christ through two gates, the "Gate of Luke" and the "Gate of Philip." Luke is the beloved physician of the New Testament. His gate represents service to others, beginning in Taiwan with medicine and education. Philip is the evangelist of Acts 8 who shares the gospel with an Ethiopian eunuch whom he meets while on the road to Gaza. The Gate of Philip, then, is the gate of personal witness. The church has adopted a Gate of Philip motto, "Each one bring one." We might imitate their example.

Our tour then continued to the troubled nation of Burma or Myanmar to meet a former student and then to Cambodia to see the magnificent ruins of the temple of Angkor Wat. In Burma, I preached in a rural Anglican church and saw something of the difficulty of life in both a village and in the enormous city of Yangon. Cambodia is somewhat more prosperous. One thing we noticed is that there are surprisingly few older people in Cambodia. Perhaps this is because a quarter of the population was murdered in 1975-79 by the Pol Pot regime.

Both countries, sadly, are badly polluted. But now we are safely home from a wonderful trip, thankful to breathe clean, fresh air and to drink a cup of cold, pure water directly from the tap. I used to think when I was younger that when Jesus spoke about "a cup of cold water in my name," he was speaking of a trivial gift. Now I know better. I am very careful about what I drink when travelling in developing countries. In practice, that means bottled water. Many of my friends frown on the use of bottled water; but, when travelling, it nears the status of a necessity.

But it does raise the question: What about the people who live in those countries? Perhaps if we had just a bit of the love for others like that shown by George Leslie MacKay, we would care for their welfare also.

Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris is dean of St. Andrew's Hall at VST.

WESLEY BATES/3INABOX

People & Places

Find more online at presbyterianrecord.ca

Photographs can be uploaded at presbyterianrecord.ca.

ST. ANDREW'S, NANAIMO, B.C.
As part of its year-long 150th anniversary celebrations, St. Andrew's invited a pair of well-known missionaries to step into the pulpit. Linda and Rev. Glenn Inglis have served in countries like Nigeria, Indonesia, Lesotho and Malawi. And Glenn was a familiar face to a few members of the congregation—he was their minister from 1986 until 1990.

CALVIN, NORTH BAY, ONT.
Sandwiches, tea and a little bit of history were served at a Victorian luncheon and bake sale put on by Calvin's ladies group. Pictured in their finery are the Victorian servers, Elaine Burrows, Brenda Walsh, Ruth Anne Drenth, Judy McKay, Joellen Brown, Irene McKee, Alice McAllister, Monique Nelson, Gerry Neily and Betty Caverly.

CRIEFF HILLS COMMUNITY, PUSLINCH, ONT.
You may recognize some of these smiling faces. The council of the Order of Diaconal Ministries met from April 19 to 21 at Crieff Hills to focus on the theme of 'The Uniqueness of Christian Community.'

THE OTHER SIX DAYS

Proving God

Smart study and silly smiles. By Bradley Childs

TITHING

The world is a crazy place. That's why three mega-church pastors pretending to be accountants and bad white rappers pushing the congregation for 10 per cent tithes with a laser light show and dance routine should be of no surprise! What is surprising then? They're actually pretty funny. I almost wrote them a cheque. Just kidding; churches are the only things left on earth that still take cheques.

FIND IT @ youtube.com. Search for "Tithe Rap 12Stone church."

SATIRE

Those crazy Irishmen are at it again. Conall and Donall meet Richard Dawkins. Though it was never particularly difficult to suss out Dawkins' circular arguments, the good ol' boys at Lutheran Satire sure make it fun to watch. It might not be as pointed as some of their other gems (see The Hippy Dippy Pope) but it's well worth the five minutes. The only problem with these wonderfully rude little people is that I can't help but click the "next video" button. They are addictive.

FIND IT @ youtube.com. Search for "Donall and Conall meet Richard Dawkins."

Donall and Conall meet Richard Dawkins.

APOLOGETICS

Tektonics is the apologetics website of one J. P. Holding; a well-known name on TheologyWeb, GodTube and YouTube. He has a handful of published books, but Tektonics is his crown jewel. Holding is a minister living in Florida and an ex-prison librarian. He is well read, very intelligent and extraordinarily arrogant. In other words, he's fun. He regularly critiques the likes of Robert Price and Bart Ehrman, taking "new" arguments against Christianity and showing how they have already been refuted. Take a look at "Abraham Lincoln didn't exist" to get a handle on what he does.

FIND IT @ tektonics.org.

BOOK

What if, in some strange dystopian future, the U.S.A. was ruled by a new political force known as the Centurion? What if the year were 2099 and miserable? And then one man dares to challenge everything: Deacon Larser. *Centurion* is the apocalyptic thriller by Ryan Casey Waller. It is the retelling of Mark's gospel from a futuristic perspective. I know it sounds odd. And it is. But it also gets you to see the story in a whole new light. And if you have a Kindle it's just $1.23. Where else can you get five hours of entertainment that cheap?

FIND IT @ amazon.ca.

Rev. Bradley Childs is minister at First, Regina.

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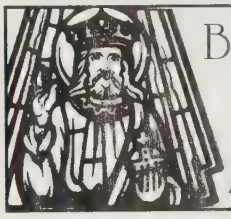

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Richmond, Richmond Presbyterian; Interim Moderator Rev. Bruce Dayton, 705-5050 Halifax St., Burnaby, BC V5B 2N5; 604-277-5410; dbd99dbd@gmail.com; for full details on the position, application and our church/congregation/community please visit the congregational profile link at www.richpres.com/wp/rpc-congregational-profile.

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obituaries

Hornsby, Mavis, aged 95 of Belleville, Ont. Long-time member of the choir and W.M.S. of St. Andrew's. Called home by her Heavenly Father, March 31. Her smile and dedication to helping others through the work of God will be missed by all.

Maddock, Rev. Robert Wayne, Wayne died suddenly September 17, 2014, at home in Hillsburgh, Ont., following heart surgery. Beloved husband of Ruth (née Schiller). Loving father of Hannah (Paul) Jamieson of Ancaster, Ont., and Paul (Irish) Maddock of Calgary, Alta. Cherished grandfather of Kyra, Colin and Eden.

Wayne was born and raised in New Liskeard, Ont., by his parents Stanley and Elsie, both elders and long-time choir members at St. Andrew's, New Liskeard. Wayne graduated from Waterloo College in 1957. He completed his theological training at Knox College in 1964 and earned his M. Div. from Waterloo Lutheran Seminary in 1975. His first church appointment for mission charge was at Metis Beach and Leggatt's Point in Gaspé, Que. He then moved to Hillsburgh, serving the two-point charge of St. Andrew's in Hillsburgh and Bethel in Price's Corners from 1965-1978. Wayne helped the congregation rebuild St. Andrew's after it was destroyed by fire and saw the mortgage paid off. He also entered the field of probation, working as a volunteer probation officer for the Erin-Hillsburgh area from 1976 to 1978.

From 1969-1993, Wayne served as Militia Padre for the 25th Toronto Service Battalion. While completing his training for chaplaincy, he maintained his military involvement serving as chaplain to the Air Cadets in Trenton and later to the Air Force in Moose Jaw and the Prairie Militia District Camp in Dundurn, Sask. In 1975, he completed his training towards the rank of Major at the Canadian Forces Base at Petawawa, Ont. In addition, during 1979-80 he joined members of the Toronto Garrison for two training periods with the National Guard at Fort Drum, N.Y. He also attended training on Ellesmere Island in Alert, the northernmost permanently inhabited place in the world. In April 1982, the federal government awarded Wayne the Canadian Decoration (C.D.) in recognition for his credible 12 years of military service in the Reserve Forces. Wayne was a long-time member of the Royal Canadian Legion, Erin Branch 442.

Wayne trained for chaplaincy at the Vanier Institute, Toronto Western Hospital and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. He was then hired by the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. His compassion and keen interest in the elderly were recognized by Veterans Affairs Canada when he was hired in 1983 as Protestant chaplain for the long-term care residents in the Veterans' Wing of Sunnybrook Hospital, concentrating on the cognitively impaired.

Following retirement, Wayne was minister emeritus at St. Andrew's in Hillsburgh where he lovingly supported the congregation and community, and his strong voice rang out in the church choir.

The City of Toronto recognized Wayne in 1997 for his 20-plus years of service on the Board of Management for the Good Neighbours Club, which provides a home-away-from-home for men over the age of 50 living on the margins of society.

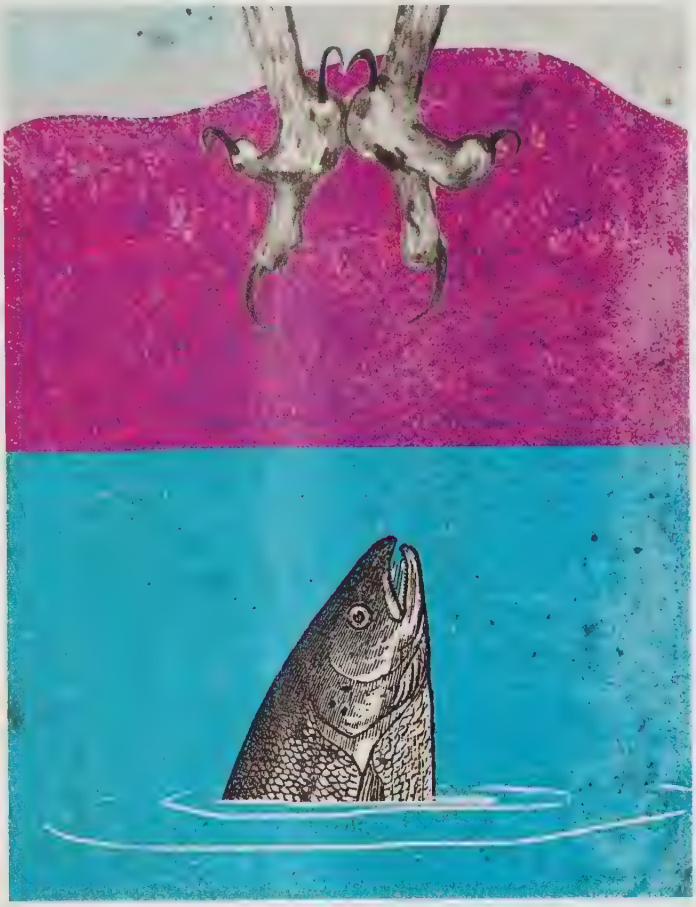
Wayne was an avid curler, and loved walking, biking and reading. He loved life and tried to live his faith every day.

A celebration of Wayne's life took place at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Hillsburgh on September 20, 2014.

FOR THE JOURNEY

A Story of Community

Diverse but united in Christ. By David Webber



The ice is out and the ospreys are in. They are my favourite birds, fishermen like me. Each year as soon as the ice blows out of Lac la Hache the ospreys show up and begin fishing. They cruise high above the water and when a suitable fish is found they plummet to the lake surface, wings tucked in like a saber jet. They hit the water head first with enough force that you would think they must have broken their neck. Then they immediately unglue themselves from the surface tension of the lake and, soaked to the skin, they begin to winch themselves skyward with a nice fish clutched in their talons. The fish has to be turned to align perfectly and aerodynamically with their body as they defy gravity and inch slowly upward. When just enough elevation has been earned, they stop flying and freefall to the earth while shaking the water from their feathers like a soaked Labrador retriever. Just before they crash, they end their shake and pop their wings and begin to fly again, with fish aligned perfectly, more freely now that they are dry, up and away towards their large nest in the top of some distant inland tree or power pole where the young await their repast.

I greatly admire the osprey. For my money there is no bird that can match their grace, beauty, tenacity and apparent dedication. That dedication is well evident in a story I discovered last summer

"Nelson" was a proud osprey father of a fledgling family that was housed in a nest on top of a power pole close to Highway 3A near Kootenay Lake. The nest was being monitored by a live webcam that was being viewed by many people. About one month into the lives of the osprey chicks, the very attentive father went missing. It turned out Nelson had been returning to the nest with a nice rainbow trout in his talons, but somehow he touched a power line on the way home and electrocuted himself.

Now this tragedy would not have been life threatening for the rest of the osprey family in itself, as the chicks still had Nellie their mom to provide for them. But in osprey families there is an ingrained characteristic. After the chicks hatch, the father typically fishes and the mother stays with the nest to feed and protect the young. So there they all sat for several days, chicks in nest, Nellie on chicks and starvation ensuing for all of them as they waited for Nelson to show up with supper.

Eventually this osprey tragedy was headed off by a combined effort involving the hydro company, a local raptor biologist and a whole bunch of concerned citizens. The raptor biologist provided the knowhow, the hydro company provided the technology and the concerned citizens provided the fresh-caught fish. The fish were delivered to the nest on top of the power pole with a complicated elevator tray that was winched up to Nellie the mother osprey who would pull the fresh fish off of the tray, rip them into bite size pieces and feed the chicks and herself. As originally reported in the *Nelson Star* last June, Nellie ›

ILLUSTRATION: BARRY FALLS

and two of the three chicks survived the next five weeks to adulthood.

I was sharing this story with a friend the other day with an obvious flare and admiration in my voice for ospreys and he somewhat surprised me with his comment: "Man; that is a really super story about community."

"Huh?" I said. And then I realized that what I hadn't seen in the story, my friend had. It *is* a good story about community, a community made up of hydro employees, raptor biologists, bird watchers, fisherfolk and ospreys. It's an odd kind of community, so odd that I didn't see it at first but a community just the same, an odd kind of community in its super diverse constituent makeup all gathered around caring for and about a single common entity, a mother osprey and her young. And as I reflect on this it kind of reminds me of Christ's church.

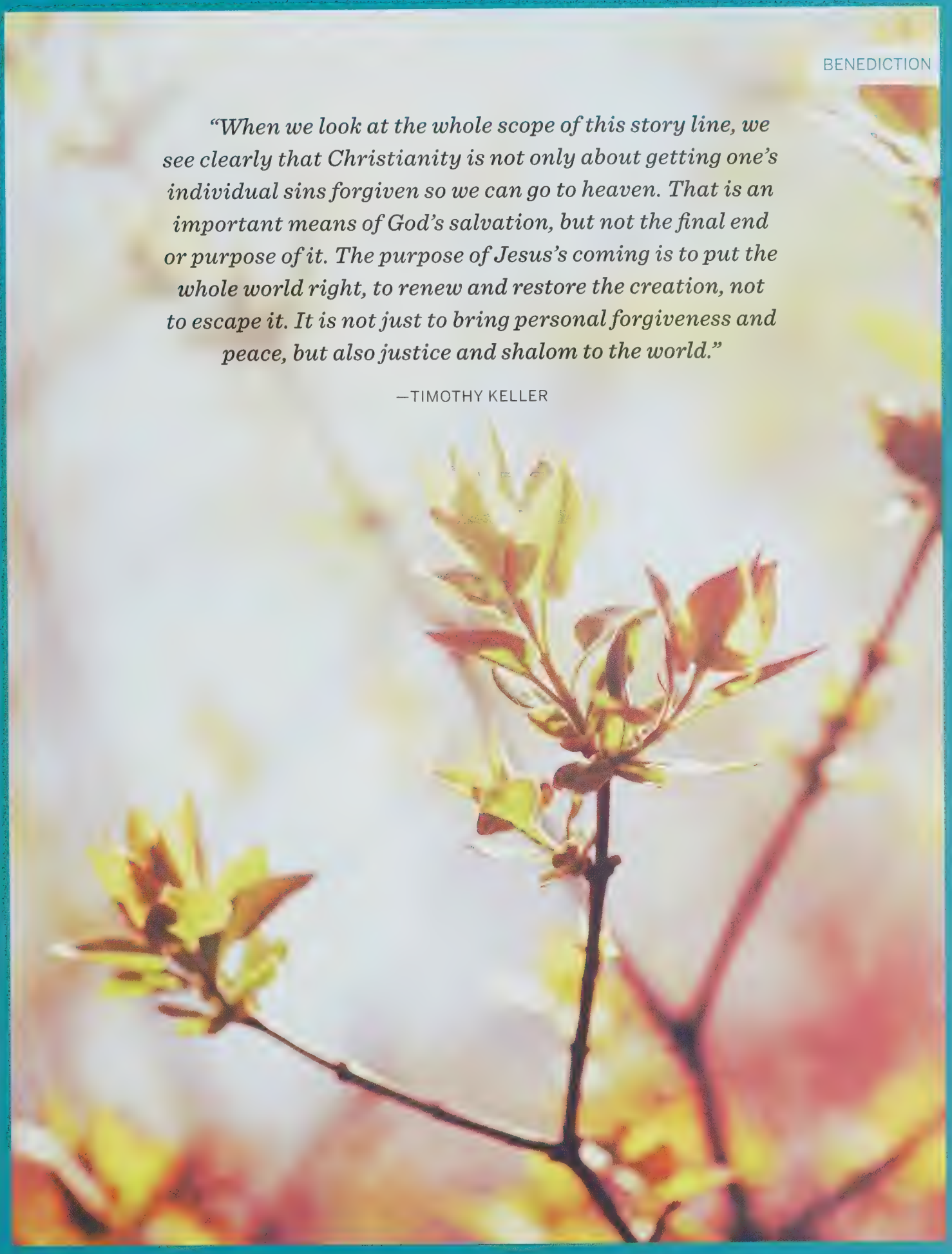
The first community gathered around Jesus was an odd bunch, too: fishermen, harlots, political zealots, people from the royal court, tax collectors, prostitutes, housewives and members of religious courts. As Easter and Pentecost came and went it was expanded to include Gentiles and Jews, Roman soldiers, rabbinical scholars, tradesmen, beggars, slaves: the list goes on and on as you read through the New Testament. It's hardly recognizable as a community it's so diverse in its constituent makeup and so spread out geographically from Jerusalem to Rome. The one thing they all had in common was a relationship with Jesus the Risen One, the one they called the Christ. And it strikes me as I reflect on ospreys, community and such, that community is often not based on uniformity or even unity for that matter, but people gathered around a central person. So often in the church I expect Christian community to be based upon uniformity or at the very least unity, and when I do I am usually left deeply disappointed. I can never find a group just like myself nor one who agrees totally with me in all things. (One more thing to thank God for, says Linda). What I can find in the church is a bunch of diverse people with diverse opinions on just about everything, but who at the same time are in a relationship with the one Risen Christ. And I can find that profound "community" in Christ in just about any place in the world.

Should I expect something else? I don't think so. And I hope not. It's really interesting and rich to hear about another's unique relationship with Jesus and at the same time explore how they are different from me and have different perspectives than I have. Many times I hear the church referred to as a group of likeminded people, meaning we all think the same and agree on everything. That's not us at all. We are a diverse bunch of people who are bound in community because of our relationship with the one Christ. Our community is grounded solely in being united with Christ, or at least it should be else we would all wear kilts. Paul summed it up best to the Philippians when he wrote to them to find their sense of community by letting the mind of Christ richly dwell in each of them, the mind of Christ that they would know from knowing Christ (Philippians 2:1-6). We are a community in Christ. We are one in Christ. We are of one mind, in Christ. This allows for a rich diversity in almost every other thing. Historically, when Christians have forgotten this, people have gotten burned.

Rev. David Webber is newly retired from the Cariboo Presbyterian Church, B.C. His fourth book, When the Aspen Flowers *can be ordered through webberink@telus.net.*

"When we look at the whole scope of this story line, we see clearly that Christianity is not only about getting one's individual sins forgiven so we can go to heaven. That is an important means of God's salvation, but not the final end or purpose of it. The purpose of Jesus's coming is to put the whole world right, to renew and restore the creation, not to escape it. It is not just to bring personal forgiveness and peace, but also justice and shalom to the world."

—TIMOTHY KELLER



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If strangers were to come and look at our General Assembly as a picture of the church, what would they see? ... Will they look at the way this General Assembly speaks? More importantly, will they look at the way this General Assembly listens? Will they look at the way this General Assembly loves one another even when they disagree profoundly with one another and in that love, in the midst of disagreement, will they see Jesus?

—REV. DR. STEPHEN FARRIS, OUTGOING MODERATOR,
AT OPENING WORSHIP OF THE 141ST GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PRESBYTERIAN
RECORD
JULY/AUGUST 2015

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General Assembly Coverage

"The Kingdom of God is like ..." Our annual gathering isn't only about rules and regulations. Andrew Faiz chats with commissioners about how they experience God, and His kingdom here on earth.

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FOR THE RECORD

Do We Trust God?

Opportunities should abound to listen to the Spirit as we ponder life's central question.

By David Harris

It's one thing to say that we trust God; it's another to actually live in that trust.

News that ranges from ISIL to the disappearance of aboriginal women to natural disasters such as the recent earthquake in Nepal, leave us shaken and disturbed. We look forlornly to God and ask: "Why? Are you really there? You don't seem to be in control."

The questions can arise in the life of the church. At June's General Assembly in Vancouver, commissioners devoted two periods of time to holy listening—small table groups where each person had an unrushed chance to share their hopes, concerns, fears, experiences and understanding around what we might call "other" sexuality, primarily same-sex relationships.

Some participants said it was their best experience ever in engaging others in a meaningful discussion of a difficult issue. For others, the process was flawed, pitting, they said, experience against scripture, with little or no theology to undergird the discussion.

But what is scripture if it is not a record of the physical, emotional, intellectual and prayerful experience of God interacting with people?

If we truly trust God, then the Spirit was moving in those table group discussions where there was lots of formal theology and where there appeared to be no theology at all. Just as surely as the Spirit moved among people in the past in recorded interactions we regard as holy—as scripture.

But what is scripture if it is not a record of the physical, emotional, intellectual and prayerful experience of God interacting with people?

The discussions at assembly were quite rightly private, so the *Record* did not listen in on them. But afterwards the groups posted the highlights around the room.

Unsurprisingly, there was fear and anxiety, mostly that the denomination might split should a decision be made to permit blessing or marrying same-sex couples.

There was also hope: hope the church wouldn't change its position, hope that it would and hope that whatever the decision, the church family would stay together.

In the end, assembly decided to refer all the formal discussion to the doctrine and justice committees. Material will also be sent to congregations so all levels of the church can engage in this discussion.

This year, as the church engages in holy listening across the denomination, it will be important to remember that God is always at work at all times and in all places, inside and outside the church.

That also means that whatever decision the church makes, God will continue to work in and through the Presbyterian Church as well as in the world outside the church.

Our challenge is to align our wills as closely as possible with God's. That's what we mean when we say we believe in the Holy Spirit or that we have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

That's also what the assembly participants interviewed by Andrew Faiz in this month's cover story were saying about their spiritual journey—about God's activity in their lives.

And if we are truly listening, we do it with an open heart, not prejudging what the right conclusion is, but trying to discern what is best for this church community at this moment in time.

In doing that, we'll be saying, despite our human frailty, we do trust God. So the question remains, Do we?

David Harris is the Record*'s publisher and editor.*

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Special Needs Ministry Needed

Re Live, Ask, Accept, May

Thank you, Becky Roushorne-Lau for writing this article. My daughter has autism.

A ministry for special needs children and their families is much needed; a place to freely worship with our children is a ministry yet to happen!

From a full-time minister, mum and daughter.

VICTORIA ELDRIDGE, HAMILTON, ONT.

Missions are Not Congregations

Re Sustaining Missions, May

It was wonderful to read and feel that someone really 'gets it.' It is more than one person can possibly do and most of us in the mission works of the church are trying to do it all. I have recently taken my second medical leave in the 20 years I have been in the Cariboo, and in returning to ministry, I don't see how the situation is going to change much.

I especially appreciated the recognition between how missions differ from traditional congregations in this area. This is a key observation for those of us who are ministering in missions and often it feels like the rest of the church doesn't completely understand that. Here in the Cariboo ›

LETTERS, continued

that line can seem blurry because in the eyes of some we are a congregation that, though different in how we worship, is like other congregations. Although we do have some of our funding coming from within the church (our folks give sacrificially to the work), this is primarily a mission bringing the love of Christ to those who live beyond the traditional church, and mission costs money. In our end of the ministry, the Nazko and Area Dakelh Outreach, we are trying to be the living presence of Christ among our First Nations neighbours. The poverty of our community means there are no funding sources from within. In other parts of the Cariboo, our sisters and brothers are living well below the poverty line and yet giving all they can give. It still requires and always will, the support of the wider church to keep this mission going. And that demands, yes demands, administration and financial know-how and continued exposure to people who want to share the work of God.

I appreciate the recognition that there are no villains. Canadian Ministries can only provide what they receive through Presbyterians Sharing and that is going down each year. Our grant for the Cariboo house church ministry was reduced by nearly 40 per cent in the past year alone. People in the church give passionately and generously and deserve to be thanked and acknowledged. Governments and foundations must be responsible with how they give out monies. In the end, we create more and more bureaucracy which ultimately takes ministers out of preaching/teaching/pastoral work and puts them behind a computer, desk and phone.

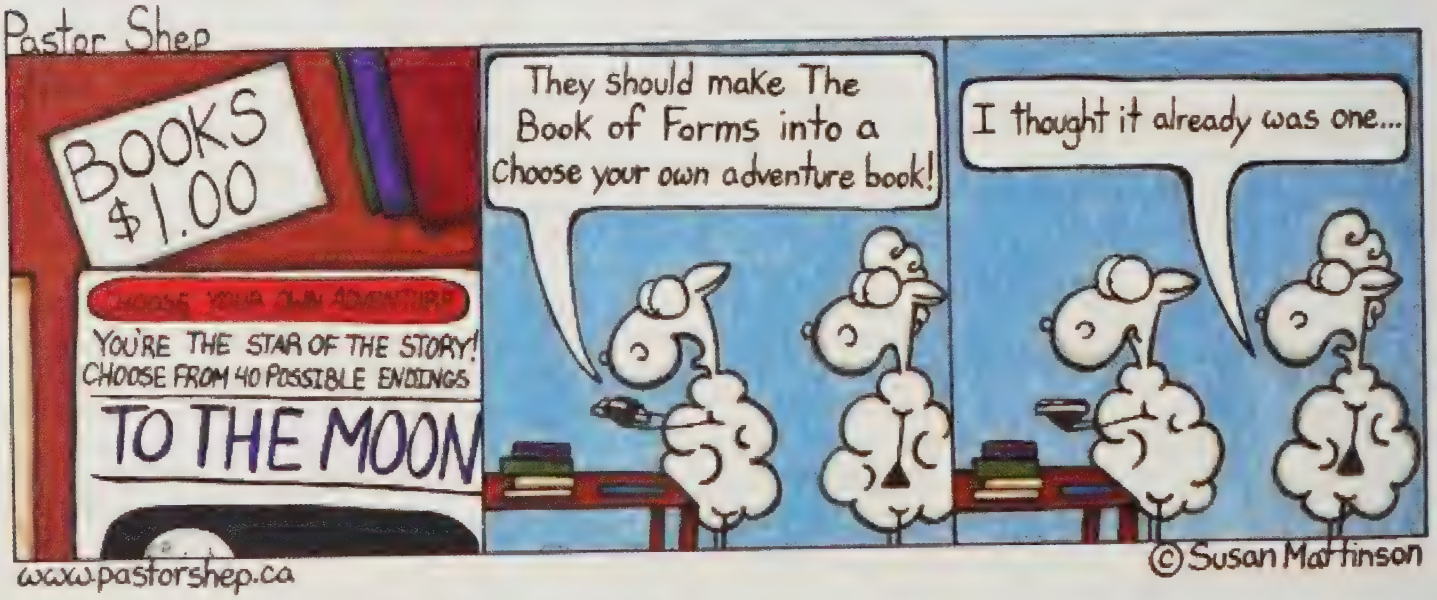
I have no answers, but it feels good to know that someone recognizes the struggle and reality that we face in mission in the church today. We long to have the abundant life that Jesus came to give so that it will flow right out of us to the hurting people around us. Lord, let your river of life flow.

SHANNON BELL, CARIBOO MINISTRIES, B.C.

Ida White—Celebrity of the Month

Greetings to you from Jobat.

We here in the Vindhya Satpura



area of the Church of North India want to celebrate the blessings and strength we enjoy in the Church, and especially among these are the people God has put in our midst.

We want to nominate a special celebrity for our Church for the month of July: Miss Ida White.

Ida will be celebrating her 100th birthday on July 22 and as one of the unsung heroines of the Church, we feel her life and witness for her Lord is well worth celebrating.

Ida spent WWII as a Nursing Sister with the Allied Army in North Africa and Italy. On demobilization she heard God's call and came to India in 1952 under the WMS to work in the medical units on the Bhil Fields.

Besides fulfilling her professional duties, she and her home were always open and unconditionally available for everyone—from widows, orphans, the dispossessed, to the wealthy. All were equally welcomed and served in her Lord's name.

The Presbyterian Church has sent many fine people to serve in the Lord's Church abroad and Ida is one of the finest. She has enriched all the lives—and there have been so many!—whom she has touched.

Therefore we put her name before the Church for a celebration.

No doubt many readers could name a special person who is the celebrity of their lives. Perhaps there could be a Celebrity of the Month column to remind us of Emmanuel—through his servants—in our midst.

Happy Birthday, Ida White.

PAULINE BROWN, JOBAT, INDIA

Quietly Glad to Continue

Re The Birth of the Continuing Church, March

Thanks for this fascinating summary of the events of that difficult summer of 1925. If I might be forgiven sharing some family history, my late father, referenced in the article, was born in 1920 and baptized into a Local Union congregation in rural Saskatchewan. My grandfather voted twice in favour of Union and the final time against. The Local Union Church split as a result of the final vote and two churches formed. My grandfather became Clerk of Session of the Presbyterian Church and his brother an elder of the United Congregation. The Presbyterian Church was named "Scott Memorial." Sadly, both congregations are now closed. As for myself, though I suspect I would have voted Union had I been around to vote in 1925, I am quietly glad to be a Presbyterian in the present church situation in Canada.

STEPHEN FARRIS, ONLINE COMMENT

Listen to Webber

Re A Most Fitting Epitaph, For the Journey, April

This is a voice to be heard clearly throughout Presbyterianland!

CHUCK CONGRAM, ONLINE COMMENT

Re Losing the Chains of Christendom, For the Journey, May

This article represents the best diagnosis of the major problem facing the church as wwell as a vision and direction for the church provided by an ordained minister in the pages of the *Record* in years.

ANDREW MITCHELL, ONLINE COMMENT

All letters—taken from emails, by post, online comments and from the Presbyterian Record Conversation Facebook page—have been edited for space. There are many ways you can join the conversation, by pen or by keyboard. Share your voice.

ehm 100 YEARS
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Urgently needed items for summer

Please help us as we are in most urgent need of the following items to serve our participants at ehm.

Over the summer, our canned food donations start to diminish as the need for food items and sundries continues to grow.

Due to the increase in people who need our services, we are in urgent need of the following items so we can meet the demand.

Food

Canned Fruit and Vegetables
Canned Baked Beans
Kraft Dinner
Dried Pasta
Pasta Sauce
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POP CHRISTIANITY

One Sunday Afternoon

It was a mess. By Andrew Faiz

The Saturday evening and Sunday morning sessions at assembly were spent at table groups sharing stories, theologies, and writing prayers for themselves and for the Church. By most accounts these were faithful and moving experiences; for many laity (and some clergy) these discussions were challenging and ultimately affirming of God's presence. No points-of-views were changed but the conversation was filled with Grace.

Then came Sunday afternoon. It started, as these things often do, from the unlikeliest source: The Committee to Nominate Standing Committees. Prior to General Assembly, nominations are received by the committee for open slots on the denomination's many committees. Nominators present a name and a reason that person should be considered. The Committee to Nominate discerns the suggestions and presents a slate.

The slate for the Church Doctrine Committee had four names of members continuing for a second term and three names for new members. Those three were nominated by the Presbytery of East Toronto.

The nominators within East Toronto felt Church Doctrine needed some more members favourable to a liberal argument. An obvious advocacy move.

Meanwhile, during assembly, commissioners who favour tradition felt the three new nominees were too "liberal." These commissioners also

attempted a simple advocacy move to support their view by switching one of the nominees with another person they thought would be favourable to their position.

And that's all it was—advocacy attempts from differing perspectives. But that's not how it played on the assembly floor. There was bitterness and anger, suspicions of conspiracies and accusations of underhanded play. Tempers flared, there were lines to register dissent, some quick-draw parliamentary moves. It was a mess. But it needn't have been.

The mess and the conspiracy talk began because the commissioners' motion was to replace the one (till that moment) openly gay minister (onequeerpresbyterian.wordpress.com) in our denomination who was named amongst the three nominees, with a much-needed representative from the Han-Ca presbyteries. It was a brilliant attempt at checkmate; but, again, obvious, pitting one minority voice against another. (Another interpretation would word it differently: It pitted homophobia against racism. We'll let that hang in the air for now.) It was ultimately defeated; with a proviso later added to include the Han-Ca candidate at the earliest opportunity.

Advocacy struggles are often bitter and justifiably filled with suspicion in society at large. We have become accustomed to hearing battling groups accuse each other of deceit. But that needn't be the case in the church—in the end our process is transparent. Decisions are made by representative members, in an open court. Wary of a motion? Get up and talk about it. That's how we lobby; in the open. (I realize there are lobbying attempts behind the scenes, but a) that's part of the advocacy process, and b) it really is not as sinister as it sounds.)

Our process requires care and prayers, honesty and confidence. We are going to disagree, and passionately, because it all matters. It matters a lot. But we have to have confidence that God is in control. If we lose that, we've lost everything.

Oh, and then we all went on a harbour cruise packed on a boat, with finger food, beverages, laughter and a lot of sunshine. Gotta love that Holy Spirit! Grace can happen, despite ourselves.

Andrew Faiz is the Record's *senior editor. Sederunt details are available at presbyterianrecord.ca and on the PCC website, presbyterian.ca.*

BULLETIN

Community and World News

Opening session of the final Truth and Reconciliation Commission event held in Ottawa last June.

PHOTO BY TED SIMARD

IN THE NEWS

Final TRC Event Held in Ottawa

Church promises to respect indigenous spirituality. By Elizabeth Keith

The Presbyterian Church in Canada has made a commitment to respecting indigenous spiritual traditions, as part of a joint statement with other denominations and following the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which marked its official close in Ottawa in early June. An interim report specifically targeted the "spiritual violence" that churches afflicted on native school children in church-run residential schools.

The PCC made that commitment in a joint letter along with other churches—Anglican, United, Roman Catholic and Jesuits of English Canada. Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris, moderator of the 140th General Assembly, signed on behalf of the Presbyterian Church.

"We are humbled in the knowledge that we continue to share a responsibility to ensure the task of reconciliation does not end today, but ›

IN THE NEWS, continued

in fact begins today," Anglican Archbishop Fred Hiltz said on behalf of the churches, in their official response to the findings.

The PCC has been an integral part of the TRC over the past six years, and that was acknowledged by Justice Murray Sinclair, one of the TRC's three commissioners, in an interview with the *Record*. "We have enjoyed a very good relationship with the Presbyterian representatives. The Presbyterians were front and centre, very early off the mark and one of the first of the church parties to finish their documents."

The event in Ottawa was emotionally charged as many survivors, church members and other non-indigenous witnesses gathered to listen and share stories of this tragic history.

The Commission's interim report lists 94 Calls to Action that pertain to everything from child welfare to education to church apologies. Stephen Kendall, principle clerk of the Assembly Council, wrote to the *Record* to say, "One could say they all relate to the church inasmuch as we are part of Canadian society and ought to be active in promoting the rights and challenges of First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in this country."

The Calls to Action repeatedly request "all religious denominations and faith groups ... to repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and peoples, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius," and for "full adoption and implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation."

Action 60 calls for "the need to respect Indigenous spirituality in its own right," and for continuous education on "the history and legacy of residential schools and the roles of the church parties in that system."

The Presbyterian Church in Canada was responsible for running two residential schools, Cecelia Jeffrey in Kenora, Ont., and Birtle School in Manitoba. In 1994, the General Assembly adopted The Confession of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, which acknowledges the church's mistreatment of aboriginal peoples.

During the negotiations of the settlement agreement, the PCC was represented by Revs. Stephen Kendall and Ian Morrison.

Sinclair praised their efforts saying, "Stephen Kendall has been a positive influence in the discussions, he keeps the level of discussion at a very even level, keeping everyone focused on honoring the agreement."

"When documents were needed, I think Presbyterians like to do things decently and in order, and maybe that's something we bring to this," Kendall told the *Record*.

Throughout the process there has been an increasing interest on the part of Presbyterians to connect and learn more about this part of their church's history.

"I think there's been a growing awareness and willingness to engage and learn and connect with brothers and sisters in aboriginal communities," continued Kendall.

Now it is up to the churches and the government to respond to these recommendations. So what does reconciliation look like for the Presbyterian Church?

"It means a lot of things. There's an emerging consensus in the reconciliation community that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People should be the centerpiece for reconciliation," said Kendall. Most importantly, he believes reconciliation will involve "individual people listening to individual people with respect and honour."

The TRC made 94 recommendations in an interim report; a full report is expected in the fall.

Elizabeth Keith is a journalism student at Carleton University, Ottawa, and was the Record's *summer intern in 2014.*

WORLD LEADERS TO GATHER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE NOVEMBER 2015

The United Nations expects to finally achieve some legally binding universal agreements on climate change during a conference in Paris this December. This will be the 21st United Nations Climate Change Conference.

Previous conferences have managed pledges that are not binding; like the one in Kyoto. The chair of the UN's Convention on Climate Change has said, "The current pledges ... are clearly not enough to guarantee that the temperature will stay below 2 degrees C and there is an ever increasing gap between the action of countries and what the science tells us."

Amongst other items on the agenda will be the differing standards necessary for developing and developed countries. This will be one of the largest-ever international gatherings on climate change. —*Laura Heming*

UNITING FAITH AND POLITICS

Alex Wilson has involved himself heavily in local Toronto missions over the years, and has served as the minister of St. Stephen's, Scarborough, Ont., for the past 10 years. This summer, he will be a multi-faith chaplain at the Pan Am Games.

Wilson is now adding politician to his resume as he sets to represent the NDP in Scarborough Centre in the upcoming federal election.

"My son and I attended an event in 2011 where Tom Mulcair was speaking. I found him to be trustworthy, and someone who stood for the same principles as I did. Being involved in the party seemed like a natural fit for me—a place for me to reach out and share my values of justice to impact the community," says Wilson.

He sees a direct correlation between faith and politics, and has always had a passion for the Jesus who constantly reaches out to the rejected in society. Out of this bloomed his desire to be a voice in the wilderness. He values a quiet place of prayer and reflection in the midst of an election, believing outreach and retreat go hand-in-hand.

"People want a leader who they can trust, just as a church desires a trustworthy pastor. In this way, the church and the local community are the same—they are made up of a very diverse group of people who need someone trustworthy to lead them."

—Laura Heming

PHOTO BY HEATHER KEITH

To Cultivate and to Keep

Rev. Kristine O'Brien, otherwise known as The Blooming Reverend, comes by her moniker honestly; not just as a blogger but also one who has had a deep relationship with the soil, which was harvested during her summers at Camp Iona.

And now her congregation at Trafalgar, Oakville, Ont., has just been awarded the 2015 Greening Sacred Spaces Award for the South Halton Peel Chapter. The award is given to a faith community who actively displays a commitment to creation care through worship, deed and widespread awareness.

For O'Brien, creation care is not about nature itself, but about people. It is about being in relationship with your communities, and honouring everything God created.

"You have to be in relationship with the earth to be able to take care of it," she says.

Trafalgar has and continues to be motivated by loving God's creation. Through small, conscious action, such as creating a community garden on site, having programmable thermostats, cleaning up local communities on earth day and walking alongside the Food for Life mission, Trafalgar has continued to live out the gospel by stewarding God's earth as best possible.

Part of this relationship involves working alongside people to care for and clean physical spaces, provide freshly grown and healthy foods, and to live out the gospel together. This idea of relationship and diversity is reflected in Pope Francis' recent encyclical, which O'Brien points out as a fascinating aspect of his call for humanity.

"Pope Francis talks about the tragedy of loss of biodiversity. I believe we are better off when we are diverse when it comes to plants and people."

Her belief that everything is connected motivates her understanding of the commitment and sacrifice that creation care takes, even within churches. "We need to understand what is not ours to exploit. In the story of creation, we were asked to till the earth, not beat it into submission. We are a part of a system. We can start taking care of it when we start noticing it is there, and spending time in it."

You can read The Blooming Reverend blog at presbyterianrecord.ca.

Laura Heming recently graduated from Redeemer College and is the Record's *summer intern.*

OP-ED

We All Benefit from Racism

And must apologize for it. By Brad Childs

I don't believe I have ever personally mistreated a native person on the grounds of race. I know for a fact that I never personally created any rules restricting First Nations peoples. When the Presbyterian Church in Canada set up residential schools I wasn't yet born. I had nothing to do with it. In fact, I'm an immigrant. I didn't come to Canada from the U.S. until 1999. I didn't join the PCC until 2005. What exactly do I have to apologize for? I don't like being blamed or taking the blame for things I didn't do. Who does?

It's true I may not be a racist, but ... I've sure benefited from it. The fact is, the rapid prosperity experienced in the United States occurred on the backs of slaves and on land first claimed by the Europeans, though Native Americans were already living there. Even people who belonged to the Union had investments in the South, wore clothes made by slaves and had sugar for their tea that came from free slave labour. They might not have been racist themselves but they sure benefited from it. Even today, many major companies still exist that were slave-fuelled at one time (part of the Canadian National Railway Company, for example, claimed the loss of dead slaves for insurance purposes). Many of these companies still thrive today because of money they made with slaves for future investments.

Very few of us would ever consider ourselves racist and yet there is no doubt that we all in fact benefit from racism. We were born into or inherited a system that restricted some and propped up others, and helped create a cycle that can only partially be escaped from (which isn't as easy to do as it is to say).

Today I own a house, built on land that was long ago taken from someone else. When the government first sold that land to a homesteader, that homesteader didn't steal that land and wasn't a bad person for buying it, but that homesteader sure benefited from racism and so have I. I benefit from it every time I shop at a store or buy gasoline made with oil pulled out of the ground that used to belong to another people. When I joined the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the residential schools were all closed, an apology in the form of a "confession" had already been issued and people by and large just wanted to forget about it and move on. And that makes sense. After all, what did most of us ever have to do with those schools anyway?

Well, in truth, I came to this country and I joined this church and I don't just get to identify with this country and this denomination and its rich heritage when it suits me. I don't get to celebrate with it without admitting its faults. I don't get to be a part of the "continuing" Presbyterian Church without being a part of the history it's continuing from. I may not be a racist but I sure have benefitted from the practice of racism at different points in our church's history.

Very few of us would ever consider ourselves racist and yet there is no doubt that we all in fact benefit from racism. We were born into or inherited a system that restricted some and propped up others, and helped create a cycle that can only partially be escaped from

Sometimes when we think about the issues surrounding residential schools in Canada we are tempted to brush them off and go about our business. It's tempting to think, "Get over it." It's tempting to blame others or ignore the issues all together. But the truth is, there is no getting around it. And it's not someone else's problem. It's ours. We all have a role to play.

I may not support racism, but I've benefited from it. How about you?

Rev. Brad Childs is minister at First, Regina.

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LEADERSHIFT

A Sign of the Times

We must 'pray' attention.

By Ross Lockhart

It was a beautiful spring morning in Vancouver. As I made my way along Pacific Avenue, I admired the nearby palm trees that gave way to a breathtaking view of English Bay and Vancouver Island beyond. My blissful commute to St. Andrew's Hall was rudely interrupted, however, as a traffic cop appeared in front of my car with a radar gun—and a frown. My first feeling was disappointment. Clearly, I was about to get a speeding ticket, though the only show of it was a police officer stepping into the middle of the road and waving me over with a colossal index finger. No flashing red and blue lights. No mini chase. No drama. Just a firm movement of the hand and I was done; feeling less like a fugitive and more like a child being directed by a school crossing guard. ›

LEADERSHIFT, continued

In addition to listening to God's Word, we 'pray attention' to the signs of the times by listening carefully to God's congregation

"Morning, officer," I said with a pasted-on smile as I rolled down my window.

"Do you know how fast you were going?" the police officer asked; that famous question that's supposed to turn motorists into mentalists. "Maybe 60 km an hour?" I guessed. "That's right," the officer replied, emotionless. "How fast are you supposed to be going here?" he inquired again. "Um, I don't know it's a city street so I assumed 50 km an hour?" I responded awkwardly. "Nope," he said with a wry smile breaking on his face, "this here is a special 30 km an hour playground zone." "Really?" I said with honest surprise looking around at rich green fields that flow down to the ocean, "where's the swing set?" "I dunno," the officer said waving his hand towards a grassy knoll, "somewhere over there, I guess." He ripped a ticket off his book and handed it to me saying, "Next time, read the signs." Ouch.

Driving, slowly, on the way to the University of British Columbia campus after that rather unfortunate encounter, I reflected on the police officer's advice to "read the signs." Surely that is part of the critical role of our 'leadershift' in ministry in these post-Christendom times. For teaching and ruling elders, reading the signs of the church, culture and movement of the Holy Spirit is critical for the flourishing of the human community and the proclamation of the gospel to those inclined to itchy ears and idols rather than worship of the living God in Jesus Christ. Greg Jones from Duke University spoke recently at the St. Andrew's Hall/VST convocation of his famous phrase, "Traditioned Innovation" as a critical piece for church leaders today. Jones told the amusing story of the airline pilot flying many years ago from New York to Los Angeles who encountered terrible fog somewhere over the Rocky Mountains. The pilot announced to the passengers that he had bad news and good news. The bad news was that they were lost in fog. The good news is they were two hours early and ahead of schedule. Nice. Jones mused out loud whether that might be the state of the church today—in a fog and caught up in a world that always seems to be ahead of itself. Traditioned innovation helps us read the signs but interpret it in light of what God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit has done, is doing and will do from creation to consummation.

In my work with congregations it involves helping disciples (including teaching and ruling elders) "pray attention" to at least three things. I encourage them to listen attentively to God's Word, God's congregation and God's community. An ability to read the signs in today's post-Christendom Canada must be deeply rooted in our ability to listen to God speak through His Word. It is too easy to turn to other "experts" and idols that will gladly offer us alternative sources of authority from scripture. We also need to "pray attention" to the signs of the times by listening carefully to God's congregation. In the local church, what is God up to? Who has God assembled in that place? What are the gifts and skills present and how might they be more effectively used for the glory of God? But we cannot stop there. God is clearly on the loose in our neighbourhoods. How might we listen carefully to what God is up to in the lives of those who live around us but may not be involved in our worshipping communities? My friend Catherine Neely Burton at Grace Presbyterian in Wichita, Kansas, offered me a good example of "praying attention" to God's community in the neighbourhood. Her church is experimenting with something they call "Laundry Love." Church folks show up at the local laundromat, pay for people's laundry, offer snacks and talk with them while they wait for their socks and sweaters to wash. It's an act of grace-filled compassion, but it is also a disciplined act of "praying attention" to where God is at work in people's lives in the community. Many of the folks doing laundry on a Friday night would never show up in church on Sunday, but they are happy to talk with caring Christians about life and faith while their sheets and towels dry.

It's an exciting time to be the church these days. Our loquacious God is always speaking and always on the move in the places where we live, work and play. The signs of God's activity are all around us, if we have eyes to see and ears to hear the glory of God in the muck and mire of our everyday, ordinary lives. We need to read the signs. The next day, while driving to St. Andrew's Hall, I passed the spot on Pacific Avenue where I received my ticket. Sure enough, there was that faded yellow sign indicating where a brief stretch of road switched from 50 km an hour down to 30. I had passed that sign countless times and never even noticed. Like the Emmaus road long ago, how many times have we encountered God's divine presence and not even realized it? It's time to pray attention to the signs.

Rev. Dr. Ross Lockhart is director of ministry leadership and education at St. Andrew's Hall, VST.

Mrs. Brøndum reading the Bible 1909, by Michael Ancher, oil on canvas.

ORIGINAL PAINTING, SKAGENS MUSEUM, DENMARK

PROGRESSIVE LECTIONARY

Days of the King

Sometimes the Bible reads like soap opera, but it still bears truth.

By Laurence DeWolfe

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost
July 26, 2015, 2 Samuel 11:1-15

The tale of King David, Bathsheba and Uriah the Hittite is the stuff soap opera is made of. A powerful man behaves as powerful men always do in soap opera. He sees what he wants. It's not a choice for him. He follows his desire. She has no choice but to fulfill his desire.

Actions have consequences. But the powerful man can handle anything. Enter the unfailingly loyal, no doubt loving, but wronged husband. His commander tells him to go home. Love and nature will cover the crime.

The faithful man chooses duty over desire. We may think him a fool for passing up a chance to go home early to his beautiful wife. But soap opera heroes and villains stay true to their natures. The good man does ›

Felicity Alexander

A Presbyterian annuitant who has good reasons to celebrate

Having her cake and eating it, too!

"Some years ago I attended a couple of Planned Giving seminars and, after discussions with my son—who is a CA and a Chartered Financial Analyst—I decided that a gift annuity would allow me to leave something to my church when I die, but still enjoy the benefit of income from the money while I am alive. So that's like having my cake and eating it, too. Here's what happened...

"In January 2010, I wrote a cheque for $20,000 to the Trustee Board of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and got an immediate charitable donation receipt for $5,600. I receive $1,070 in income from the annuity every year, and, thanks to the CRA, the taxable portion of that annual amount is so small that there's nothing to pay. It's a win-win situation!"

The above words are adapted from a presentation Felicity Alexander made to her home congregation, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, in Brampton, Ontario, on the benefits of gift annuities for both donors and the church.

The above example is for illustrative purposes only. Gift annuity rates are subject to change.

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It leaves us asking why God would allow us to cause people we love such pain when we are at fault. Does God allow us freedom to abuse others so we'll realize we need to repent?

the noble thing. The bad man exploits the good and gets his way.

Next Sunday, David will face judgment for his deeds and hear a prophecy of endless strife in his household. He will confess his sin. The son born to Bathsheba will die. (In soap opera and ancient story, mothers always suffer.)

But this is the Bible. David's still a hero. He and Bathsheba will have another son, who will survive all the strife around him. Solomon will be a better king than his father ever was, though not a better father.

Can we find anything to preach in this story? We could read it as a fable. The moral? You may have what you need to get what you want, but God will get you in the end! But in life, as in soap opera, it's never as clear-cut as that. This is the Bible. David's still a hero.

There's an old saying. "Man proposes, God disposes." The mystic Thomas à Kempis may have said it first. Plan what you will, but God's will will be done. It's never as clear-cut as that. It helps to believe God can pull some good purpose out of the worst messes we make. It leaves us asking why God would allow us to cause people we love such pain when we are at fault. Does God allow us freedom to abuse others so we'll realize we need to repent?

According to the theology Samuel and David represent, David is God's man no matter what he does. God will bless him. God will punish him. David is still God's choice for king and founder of a dynasty. David has freedom in his relationship with God. God's will is always done, not always with David's full cooperation. Lesser beings get hurt along the way.

This is the Bible. But this isn't the whole Bible. David is God's covenant partner, but not God's only partner. This is one of the best-known Old Testament stories. But it's not the whole Old Testament story. It does, however, reflect a theme that runs throughout Old Testament: I am God. You are not. Trust me.

God is holy. We may aspire to holiness, but we'll never attain it this side of heaven. Anything good we do in God's name is God's, not ours. If we have power to do good, we also have the capacity to use that power for our own satisfaction. That's the truth, but we're not condemned forever by it.

The heroes of our faith are all flawed. They have more than feet of clay. But we know what God can do with clay. David died a tragic figure, grieving his sins and the blood he shed. The kingdom he united barely survived his son's reign.

The church has always been at its worst when it has adopted Samuel and David's theology. The church has always been most faithful when it has remembered that power—its own or anyone else's—isn't God.

Rev. Dr. Laurence DeWolfe teaches at Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax.

ISTOCK

RENEWAL

Experiencing General Assembly

In fellowship and prayer. By Fred Stewart

I had the privilege of attending General Assembly last month as a visitor in my role with the Renewal Fellowship. Let me share some highlights of my time there.

I experienced GA in WORSHIP.

General Assembly 141 was kicked off with wonderful opening worship that included uplifting singing and an inspiring sermon from Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris, moderator of the prior assembly. A highlight for me was the sharing of communion around the Lord's Table. Each morning's worship helped us begin our day together with energetic praise singing and thought-provoking sermons. ›

RENEWAL, continued

There are some incredible stories of the Lord's faithfulness and blessing across the country

I experienced GA in FELLOWSHIP.
One of the best things about General Assembly is the opportunity to connect with Presbyterians from across the country. It is a time to meet up with new friends and old. There is so much to share as we have so much in common.

I experienced GA in PRAYER.
Prayer was such an important part of our time there. It started on the eve of assembly with a small group walking the campus to each of the key spots where assembly would happen and praying for the people and proceedings. It continued each morning with a group gathering to pray for assembly that day, and in sederunts set aside for prayer alone. For many, the Moderator, Rev. Karen Horst's prayers beginning each sederunt, were powerful.

I experienced GA in MINISTRY.
Just like my Encouragement Road Trips across Canada, I had opportunity to minister to some of our ministers engaging in deep conversation. These conversations ranged from desperation to great joy. I love that I can serve our church in this way.

I also got to sit with different combinations of commissioners processing the days' happenings together. This provided other opportunities to encourage the discouraged and to point to our Sovereign Lord, maker of heaven and earth and worthy of our faith and trust.

I experienced GA in CONTROVERSY.
As I travelled Eastern Canada in May, I was made aware of the significant amount of anxiety surrounding this assembly. The issues surrounding human sexuality that were on the docket elicit a full range of opinions and beliefs. There is potential for great division in our denomination.

I supported the attempt to have a time of conversation and a time of prayer this year; with a consideration of responses planned for the future. As a supporter of the belief that all people should be welcome in Christ's church but that there are biblical standards that inform our view of marriage and ordained leadership, I find myself worrying about our future together. I need to remind myself about Who is in charge and how much He has at stake.

I experienced GA in HOPE.
The best part of my time in Vancouver was the irrepressible hope that invaded each day and many reports and conversations. There are some incredible stories of the Lord's faithfulness and blessing across the country. If you are discouraged and find yourself thinking too much of lost causes and hopeless situations, you need to discover the new sprouts of life and growth, sometimes in unlikely places, that are showing up in the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Rev. Fred Stewart is executive director of the Renewal Fellowship, and minister at St. Andrew's, Bolsover, and Woodville Community churches.

ISTOCK

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ORDINARY RADICAL

Intentional Outreach

Seeing those who are missed. By Amy MacLachlan

"Faith, for me, isn't an argument, a catechism, a philosophical 'proof.' It is instead a lens, a way of experiencing life, and a willingness to act." —Sara Miles, *Take This Bread: A Radical Conversion*

On a beautiful sunny day in June, I drove to Paris.

Ontario, that is.

I was headed for Paris Presbyterian—a castle-like red brick building in the centre of town. Once there, I met Rebecca Sherbino, who, along with friend Colleen Graham started The Raw Carrot about a year ago.

The Raw Carrot—with its tagline, "Peeling for Change"—is a soup-making business borne of the need to help members of the community find meaningful and lasting employment. The idea took root when Rebecca noticed how many unemployed people were coming to the church's ›

ORDINARY RADICAL, continued

Paul Scheidel is a proud employee of The Raw Carrot.

drop-in, and how their unemployment affected their overall health.

"They were bored," she told me, noting how frustrating it is for someone to admit they have no job—and no prospects of finding one. "But we've seen a huge difference in the well-being of people who come to the drop-in when they work here. It gives them a sense of pride."

Raw Carrot employees aren't otherwise connected to the church, but they've found a church-type community in the basement kitchen where they come to work two days a week. Finding work and keeping a job in the mainstream sector is just about impossible for many of the Carrot's employees due to challenges like mental illness and learning disabilities.

"But here they know that if they aren't able to show up for two weeks, they'll still have a job waiting for them," said Rebecca.

Employees prepare and cook healthy soups made with locally-sourced ingredients and bake breadsticks which are then sold to the community. It's a recipe for change that many people support.

"We thought that if we sold $5,000 in our first year, we'd be doing well," Rebecca told me, as we watched the team of employees and volunteers from the congregation stand shoulder-to-shoulder chopping veggies. "So far we've reached $20,000! That's way more than we thought."

A couple columns ago, I spoke about justice. The desire to make things right; to go beyond charity and make meaningful and lasting change in someone's life. This is what The Raw Carrot is doing.

Both Rebecca and her husband, Rev. Joel Sherbino are no strangers to Shane Claiborne and his idea of "ordinary radicals." Claiborne's values of hospitality and community are two things the couple strive for both in the church and in their own lives. They served as missionaries in Malawi for several years before coming to Paris, (where they first got hooked on the idea of hospitality), and Joel leads the church in a way that I would say is different than many.

"We invest in people who otherwise would easily be missed," he told me, noting that his main role is to serve struggling individuals in the community, rather than members of the congregation who already have each other. "And we're seeing the benefits of that."

Paris has become a hub for community activity and information. Government organizations and community groups come to the church when they have something to offer and are seeking partnerships, and people in the community who need help approach Joel or Rebecca for support.

"You have to be intentional," Rebecca told me, "otherwise, it's too easy for people to slip through the cracks."

"I like to tell the story of first coming to Paris," said Joel, admitting social justice was always "a bit of a blind spot" before Rebecca opened his eyes, "and thinking, 'This church should be doing more!' And my lovely wife said to me, 'Well Joel, what are *you* doing?'"

***

Since this is our summer issue, I'm not going to propose a new challenge. Last month we talked about cultivating silence and asking God for guidance. I think I'll try to continue in that vein, taking these warm days for reflection, reading and re-thinking.

That said, be sure to check my blog for updates—I've been busy! Evangel Hall in Toronto, Kerr Street Mission in Oakville (where I was serenaded with "Once in Love with Amy"—I like the 1952 version by Ray Bolger); and later this month I'll be heading to a convent (!!!) for some quiet contemplation, and to the streets of downtown Toronto in the middle of the night during the Pan Am Games. Stay tuned for more on that.

Happy summer.

Amy MacLachlan is the Record's *managing editor. Follow her blog at presbyterianrecord.ca.*

PHOTOS BY AMY MACLACHLAN

Life

Thoughts and inspiration for your daily life

ISTOCK

FAMILY

Aslan in the City

Wishing for magic and adventure.

By Katie Munnik

It's interesting to live in a city with a zoo.

I hadn't really noticed that until today. It has been a day off school for the kids and another family invited us to join them at the zoo. And it was wonderful.

Six kids, three parents and the whole day ahead of us, one of those perfect warm spring days that slips into the calendar in ›

To watch a much-loved child caught up in complete adoration becomes a moment of clarity. So this is love. This is what love looks like. What love feels like

between all the rainy forecasts. We'd dressed the kids in layers of sweaters and raincoats in the morning and then spent the day pushing around a coat-laden stroller while the tee-shirted kids ran on ahead. The sun was warm and bright, the trees blossomed and the grass dry enough to sit on. At lunchtime we were joined by the completing fourth parent for a picnic.

Sausage pie, carrots and celery, hard-boiled eggs, sourdough crackers. Popcorn cookies, a bottle of juice and coffee in a thermos. Chocolate when necessary. A good recipe for a good day.

It felt like such a gift to go out: out of our routine, out of the neighbourhood, out of the ordinary. There were plenty of chimpanzees and cheeky monkeys to watch, nesting penguins, sunning bears and a sleepy porcupine hidden in the fork of a tree. But the very best of the best was witnessing my eldest son, Leo see a lion for the very first time. Magic. He's mad about big cats, which has something to do with his budding naturalist tendencies (he keeps a well-thumbed reference book under his pillow) and something to do with the Narnia books we've been reading at bedtime. We're set to read chapter 13 of *The Last Battle* tonight and he's holding his breath for Aslan to work everything for the good. If you've read the Narnia books, you might remember that the last one is very, very bleak until quite close to the end—which we almost are. It's tense stuff. We need Aslan soon, very soon. I think so, and so does Leo.

He also thinks we need Aslan here in our neighbourhood. I told him that Aslan isn't a tame lion, and wouldn't fit in our backyard anyway but he was wonderful in the story, wasn't he? Which felt like a rather lame parental answer even as I said it. Leo just sighed.

"I wish Aslan were real."

This time, I didn't answer with anything other than a squeeze for his hand.

"And I wish we could go on an adventure."

I reminded him about the hill we climbed recently.

"I mean a real adventure. With magic."

Yes, my love. That would be wonderful. What more can you say? I don't want to dull Narnia with too many words or explanations. So I hugged him as he hugged his yellow, quilted lion (thanks, Oma) and buried his head in the sofa cushions.

But then today at the zoo, he got to see a lion.

There was a raised walkway at the far end of the lions' field which led to a small hut—something like a bird hide, but with large glass windows looking over the field. There were already a fair number of people there, and from how they were chatting away, I figured that there must be nothing to see. But I was wrong. There, maybe a third of the way down the field, was the lion. He lay on the sunny grass, facing away from us, tawny and tired, but after a moment or two, he rose to his feet, turned around and settled again, this time with his wonderful face looking our way. Gorgeous. Adjectives seem superfluous for a lion—he was all that he should be. Leo sat right down on the floor of the hut, eyes wide and his nose pressed against the glass, watching in adoration.

Adoration can be a difficult attitude for us adults, except perhaps when we are watching our children. To watch a much-loved child caught up in complete adoration becomes a moment of clarity. So this is love. This is what love looks like. What love feels like.

Later, Leo confided in me that his sister told him something amazing. She'd said that in the moment when the lion turned his mighty head towards us, she'd seen that he looked right at Leo and actually winked.

Again, love.

Now at home again, it's beautiful to know that we're in the same city as that marvellous face. Some evenings when the wind is right, we can hear the city's church bells from our neighbourhood and maybe the lion can, too. He, too, is a part of our city, out there like the bells in the settling evening, still there as the day draws to a close and we draw curtains.

There is a poem by Ted Hughes about sitting at home and hearing the wolves howling in the London zoo. But for me, it's the memory of Leo and his lion that will echo tonight. One moment in our full days, but a deep one, I think. A moment from our own real adventure and, yes, it is full of magic, my love, real magic because lions are real and lovely, real and living. Just like their maker, and just like you.

Katie Munnik lives in Scotland with her husband and three children. She blogs each Monday at the Messy Table.

ISTOCK

MEDITATION

The Potter and the Clay

God shapes, but doesn't control us. By Jody Malm

Have you ever played with clay? I have, and it's hard and thick; it needs water to soften, change and take shape. I love the feel of it in my hands. It's smooth, relaxing, almost soothing as it spins round and round in your hands as you pump the foot peddle. You meditate, pray, get lost in the feeling.

Then it begins to take shape. I'm reminded that each clump of clay shapes and feels differently. Sometimes it needs a little water, sometimes more water, and then oops, too much. It can take shape quite quickly, or need hours of coaxing and care. Sometimes you have to start again and again. This is frustrating. Yet you don't give up, knowing the piece of art it will become. You can see it, feel it.

I can see God sitting down to the potter's wheel, picking up a chunk of clay. Looking at it, feeling it in His hands, He starts to cut away chunks until He has the right size. Then foot pumping and spin, spin, hands around it lovingly, letting it take form, adding tiny splashes of water to soften it and work it some more. It becomes a bit stiff, add more water. It continues to grow and change, it starts to look wonderful. He has warm, kind hands and then God closes His eyes and prays for His pot.

Do you think we could be the pot? At birth, God sees the beauty we will be, as we grow and change and take shape. He adds water, living water; family, friends, places, things, love. His hands are wrapped ›

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around us gently, never too tight. He lets us take on our own shape; He is there to guide but not rule over us.

Sometimes we break and fly apart. But when we do, God scoops up the clumps of clay and works it back together and helps us start again. As we go through life, God's hands are around us. Yet there will be times when we don't feel God with us and become cracked; angered, bitter, hurtful, or lonely and sad. It becomes harder and harder for us to continue, we crack more and more.

It doesn't mean we're unchangeable or untouchable, it just means we need water, living water. We hit our knees, tears come, water comes, and forgiveness comes. We need God's hands. We begin to pray and ever so gently we feel His hands and a little water is added. We begin to feel peace fill our hearts. His hands are at work once again and we start to soften, this piece of clay, us, you and me, will grow and change and fill up with God's love. I know I have times when I'm supple, open to God's plans, with His hands gently, lovingly wrapped around me. I also have times when I'm cracked, dry and desperately thirsty for God.

And when our life is drawing to an end here on earth, I like to think that God's hands become even more comforting as the piece of clay is finished. I picture God sitting back and admiring the finished pot with loving eyes, saying, "Beautiful. Job well done!"

"We are the clay and You are our potter; we are all the work of Your hand." (Isaiah 64:8)

Jody Malm was raised in the Cariboo region of British Columbia, and is a member of the Sheridan Lake House Church.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JAN HIEMINGA

PILGRIMAGE

I Made It!

Walking the Camino de Santiagio. By Jan Hieminga

People have asked me, what was it like? It was a wonderful experience, but not easy. A typical day started at 6 a.m. With an 800 km journey ahead of you, and walking six to eight hours a day, you want to get an early start. You leave in the dark before the lights are on in the auberge. Many of the other pilgrims, whom you have shared anywhere from a dozen to 100 bunk beds with by the end, are also getting up.

After you put on your backpack and boots, you make sure that your headlamp is on, as outside it is pitch dark and does not get light till after 8:00. Your lamp lights the way because the path is often uneven and rocky, and you need to follow the yellow Camino markers. They can be anywhere: on a post, a tree, a road sign, a rock, on the ground or guardrails.

After you have walked for two hours, it is time to find a place for breakfast. A delicious latté, freshly-squeezed orange juice and a large slab of toast with butter and jam. You find a place to sit among other pilgrims, who have come from all over the world. You make instant friends. Even when you don't speak the same language, you find a way to converse. ›

PILGRIMAGE, continued

Then we're off again.

The terrain varies from mountains and forests to flat prairie landscapes, with temperatures ranging from very cold in the mountains to very hot on the plains with no place for shade. My daughter joined me for the first two 200 km. They were among some of the hardest. Crossing the Pyrenees was not easy; however, when you get to the top, the view is breathtaking.

You never know what you will encounter on the way. A shepherd and his flock crossed our path a few times. It struck me how gentle the shepherd was with his sheep. Is that why David called the Lord his shepherd?

When it is time for lunch you have a choice. You can either eat what you brought with you—usually a stick of bread and a chunk of goat cheese, or you can look for another café.

At about 2:00 it is time to start looking for a place to spend the night. When you check in, your passport number is recorded, a requirement of the Spanish government. You wash your clothes in a small tub or sink. Then it is time for a siesta. All shops and businesses close in the afternoon. For me, it was time to write my blog. It is also a time to make new friends. You can start the Camino alone, but you cannot stay alone.

Talking with some of these friends, I came to the conclusion that the Camino has three phases. The first is physical, when all your attention is on where it hurts. Blisters need attention and muscles need a rest. Every town has a pharmacy where people are very helpful in finding the right treatment for your feet.

The second phase is mental. After two weeks or so, your feet have adjusted. By now you have covered 200 km or more and you see a road sign that says that Santiago is another 600 km. You start to wonder, why am I doing this? You doubt whether you will be able to finish. This is when you need to encourage each other and yourself. You focus on the beauty of the ever-changing landscape and on the friends you make along the way. You share personal stories and reflect on what you expect to learn along the Camino.

The third phase is spiritual. By now you have passed the halfway mark and you start to talk about what you will do when you get to Santiago. You reflect on what you have learned. You ask, will this change my life and will these changes last when I am home?

Most people I met walked the Camino for a reason. They had something they wanted to reflect on. For some it was a career change. For others it was the state of their marriage. For others still, it was a transition into retirement. For most, I think, it was related to the question, what will I do with the rest of my life? They had a decision to make.

Every town we passed through had a church or cathedral at its centre. The churches were all open and they invited you to come in and rest. Usually there was an elderly man or women welcoming you in Spanish and giving you a stamp on your pilgrim's passport. In Santiago it will be reviewed to see if you have walked the minimum 100 km required to receive the *Compostela*, the pilgrim's certificate proving that you have walked the Camino.

Finally we reach the end of the journey. Exactly 40 days after we started our walk in the south of France, we have reached Santiago.

We have made it.

Finistera, the end of the world, is the end of our Camino. But it is also the beginning of our journey for the rest of our lives. Will it be a different journey because of what we have learned? What have I learned?

I have learned that we can live with a lot less than we think. On the Camino you don't buy anything you don't need, because you have to carry it on your back. Jesus preached against acquiring a lot of stuff. He told us to pray for our daily bread, nothing more. And Jesus told us to give our burdens to him. Carrying 20 pounds everywhere you go becomes a real burden. I learned not to carry more than I have to and to bring my burdens to he who said, my burden is light.

I learned that the Camino is about people. People you meet along the way become your friends. You experience the same things. And you look after each other. The Camino is about helping each other, but also about accepting help from others. I had to learn that. I had to learn not to worry because someone will look after you. I learned not to worry because God looks after me.

I learned that we are all headed for the same destination. For this pilgrimage, whatever our age, the country we came from, how fast or slow we walked, we all ended up in the same place. The same can be said for life.

Camino means "the way." The way we should live. Walking the Camino has forced me to focus on what is important. It has made me look at people differently. On my walk through Spain I got strength from knowing that my wife, Lynne would be waiting for me in Santiago. Through all the ups and downs of my journey through life, I know that someone will be waiting for me on that day when I reach my final destination. Someone I love and who loves me.

Buen Camino is how you greet each other along the pilgrimage. *Buen Camino* to all of you fellow pilgrims.

Rev. Jan Hieminga is minister-in-association at Knox, Oakville, Ont. At the age of 72, he walked the Camino in support of the JaneFinch ReachingUp program, which helps kids in the Jane and Finch area of Toronto, and is housed at University Presbyterian. His walk raised $30,000 for this ministry.

Focus

Stories of mission, ministry and community

REVIEW

The Bible in a Year

A study guide that speaks to the challenges of church.

From a Garden to a City
Kobus Genis
CreateSpace, 2015

"A fly-half is crucial to a team's game plan; they possess leadership and order the back line. They ... need to be decisive with what actions to take and be effective at communicating with the outside backs. Good fly-halves are calm, clear thinking and have the vision to direct effective attacking plays."—Wikipedia.com

Not to push it too far, but this definition of a rugby position could be used for a pastor or preacher. Kobus Genis is indeed those things, and played fly-half in his school days in South Africa. Along with being the minister at Westminster, Calgary, he is the author of several Bible studies.

His latest is *From a Garden to a City*, a daily devotional that touches upon all the books of the Bible over the course of 365 days. A minister since 1992, Genis approaches each day's meditation on three levels: ›

ISTOCK

REVIEW, continued

First, to read and understand the passage. Second, to apply the message to current realities. And, third, to communicate that message in our daily lives. It's a classic structure, of course, born of a fly-half, calm and clear.

When asked for two samples that might speak to the issues at General Assembly, Genis provided these two: one about food and one about hospitality. Now that's keeping the Bible alive. *—Andrew Faiz*

Romans 14

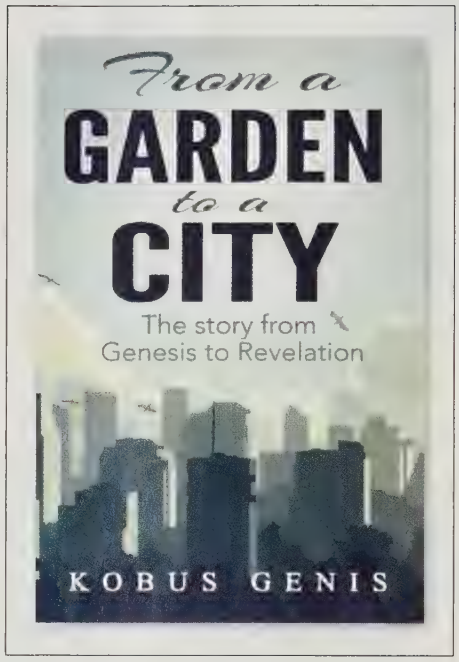
1-3 Accept those whose faith is weak. Don't judge them where you have differences of opinion.

It is sad when Christians fight among themselves—usually about trivial matters! However, should Christians always agree about everything?

In Paul's day, the believers differed among themselves on what food was pure and what food was impure. Some believers only ate vegetables, because they considered all other food impure. According to these believers, the other Christians were committing sin by eating the so-called impure food. Paul referred to these believers as weak, because they did not realize that they were free and could eat any food they wished.

Although Paul spoke to both groups, he agreed with the strong ones. He asked them to accept the weak ones and not to despise them. The strong ones could win the argument that all food was pure but could lose the person. It was therefore good not to get involved in such unnecessary arguments. Paul also instructed the weak believers, who considered all kinds of things sinful, not to judge the believers who differed from them in their beliefs.

A wonderful explanation then follows: "God has accepted them." Even



today, believers have different opinions on moral issues (such as abortion, gambling and homosexuality) and dogmatic issues (such as baptism). The challenge is to disagree without being disagreeable. Let's learn to accept one another and not condemn each other ... because God has accepted us!

"In essentials, unity; in differences, liberty; in all things, charity."—Philipp Melanchthon

Acts 16

14-16 After Lydia and her family were baptized, she kept on begging us, 'If you think I really do have faith in the Lord, come stay in my home.' Finally, we accepted her invitation.

This section describes Paul and his friends' first missionary journey to Europe. They go to the city of Philippi, a very important town in Macedonia (today in the northern part of Greece). Paul always visited the synagogue when he visited a new city. However, Philippi did not have a synagogue, because few Jews lived there. So Paul and his friends went to the river on the Sabbath, because they thought they could find a place of worship there. While there at the river, something wonderful happened.

Paul and his friends felt like strangers on their first outreach to Europe. In the city of Philippi (northern Greece) Lydia, a trader in expensive purple woolen cloth became the first convert of Europe.

After her conversion, she immediately showed hospitality towards Paul and his friends by begging them to stay at her house. The Bible places a high value on hospitality (Romans 12:13). Hospitality means, "love of strangers."

Even businesses understand the importance of hospitality. Danny Meyer is one of the most famous restaurateurs in New York City. He attributes his success not just to the quality of the food, but to the attention he places on hospitality. His book's title, *Setting the Table: The Transforming Power of Hospitality in Business*, speaks for itself.

Meyer says everyone wants great service. However, there is a difference between service—someone doing what they're supposed to do—versus hospitality.

According to Meyer, service doesn't say anything about how someone made you feel. Hospitality does. Hospitality as presented to us in the Bible is not merely a practice. Instead, it is a way of life.

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."
—Maya Angelou

To learn more: www.biblegps.net.

ISTOCK

REFLECTION

Prayers of the People

A portrait of our church.

On Sunday morning at General Assembly, commissioners met in table groups to write prayers for the Presbyterian Church. These prayers were read to the assembly later in the morning.

These are but a few of those prayers. They represent the hopes and wishes of the gathered, and form a portrait of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. ›

Dear God, help us to love one another as you love us, unconditionally as a mother or father loves their children. Help us to have respect for one another, to be loving, accepting and welcoming to all people. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female, neither free nor bound, neither gay nor straight.

Help us to love all humanity, to be caring, understanding, and to help one another; we believe you love all your children.

We pray that we would have eyes to see as you see, that your will for our collective life would be clearly discerned by us.

Please bless all your children and bring your salvation and healing to everyone.

I pray for those who hold to traditional marriage and traditional ordination ethics, that they might sense their worth and gifts are important to the PCC, even as they feel forced to consider other church fellowships, although they have served this church or been a part of it for many years.

Lord, teach us, who can be so divided, to be one as you are one. Teach us how to be one without compromising your truth or who we know ourselves to be. Teach us to be one in love and care, that you may be seen in us in just those places that drive a wedge between us. Lord, you are capable of more than we can imagine. Take those places where we have feared division and name calling, and let us find a grace we did not expect to see. By the spirit that surprises us often, surprise us in the love, charity and care manifest in us, your church.

Heavenly Father, in response to your great love, we pray that you will fill us with the Holy Spirit so that we can discern your direction, so that all of us who you have uniquely created can be accepted, loved, and welcomed, and have the opportunity to be authentic and share the gifts that you have given us without being held back due to fear or condemnation, as you are the giver of grace and the only true judge.

Dear Lord, forgive us, help us to be like your son, Jesus Christ; be merciful to us.

Lord give us the strength to make the right decisions.

God, break the power of fear among us, and lead us to a place of safety, justice and welcome.

Thank you, Creator God, for your presence among us as we discern your will. May your inclusive kingdom come; a time and place and attitude of joyful abundance, of generous hospitality, of genuine healing, of grace-filled love and justice for all. Your kingdom come, your will be done. Surprise us with your love and grace once again so we may see you in a fresh and new way. Everlasting God, pour over your church your love, grace, power and truth so we may proclaim your kingdom, seek your will to be a faithful people in word and deed and witness your Son's coming.

We pray that those who feel they are excluded feel part of the dialogue and not just the object of the conversation.

Dear God, help us to live our faith daily by being open to what is different, loving to those who are hurting and always mindful of the needs and desires of others.

Amen!

You can add your own prayers to these online at presbyterianrecord.ca.

Coverage of the 2015 General Assembly

Commissioners at the 141ST assembly were asked to 'imagine the Kingdom.'

ILLUSTRATION: BARRY FALLS/HEART AGENCY

Encounters with God

At General Assembly. Interviews by Andrew Faiz

GENERAL ASSEMBLY is about the business of the church and that business seems dry to many. This year, along with the much anticipated and expected conversation on sexuality, usual amounts of time were spent on money and grammar. Still, only the most cynical would mock the assembly as pointless. Really important things happen: Community happens, strangers interact with each other. Commissioners encounter people from other faiths and denominations. Time is taken to honour veteran missionaries and church workers. And, this year, commissioners were given an extended opportunity to talk with and listen to each other; to share divergent views in a spirit of openness and grace. Together, they crafted prayers for their church, and imagined what the kingdom of God is like. Through all of this and more, the richly textured tapestry of God's dominion is glimpsed within the course of the meeting.

Which only serves to encourage each commissioner's personal journey with Christ. They are engaged with Jesus, through whom they encounter God, daily. It's something we don't talk about often: General Assembly really is an enlightening spiritual journey for the gathered.

The *Record* asked 17 people at assembly to talk about the last time they felt God in their lives. They were chosen arbitrarily; often accidently if an opportunity was convenient. This is not a thorough survey, nor an attempt to represent every facet of the denomination. It is only the voices of these people and their encounters with God, who collectively represent a part of God and this denomination.

The remaining interviews, along with more reports and stories, plus hundreds of photos from General Assembly are available on our website. In these pages we begin by seeing God in our lives. This is all about God, and that God is infinite and beyond our imagination, yet present and active in our daily lives. We need to be reminded; these brief interviews are a start.

Please go online—presbyterianrecord.ca—and share your own story of the last time God touched your life. Or the most significant recent encounter. Upload a selfie and share a story to the Presbyterian Record Community Facebook page. Tell your story of God in your life. Let us remind each other why we do this thing called Church.

And shift the focus to where it belongs.

KAREN HORST
St. Andrew's, Orillia, Ont.
Moderator, 141st General Assembly

Today [Sunday June 7th] would be one of those amazing experiences when you sense the collective body of people who are faithful to God and Christ and Holy Spirit, wanting to discern the leading of God and there's been a real zeal to do so. And I know that we've had different opinions here and they are quite divergent and yet there's been an incredible respectfulness and I sense the Spirit in the midst of that.

I know God every day of my life, but one of the most memorable that comes immediately to mind is the loss of a very dear friend who died of cancer and we travelled that journey together.

AMBER FRISA
St. Andrew's, Strathroy, Ont.

I've come to General Assembly twice before and this time I get to see a lot of familiar faces. The first time was a great learning experience; it was my first time with a more official national level. The second time I came as a Young Adult Representative. The first time I came as an elder.

I recently felt God in my life during a transition getting separated.

It was definitely the most time I've spent leaning on God and letting God guide me through it. All the way through, learning how Jesus would treat people and applying that to a situation where, sort of, left on my own devices I might not have been as nice as I was.

Does that make sense?

BRAD BLAIKE
Summerside, P.E.I.

The last time I encountered God in my life was a couple of hours ago, in our small groups listening to each other.

I think in the process, the way it unfolded, there was this space to listen to each other, to really encounter each other. So, I found myself sitting at this table with people I'd never met before, people I didn't know, and all of a sudden we were united in our fellowship, in our discussion.

It was really cool. It was a God moment. We didn't all agree and that's okay, we didn't have to, we were united in Christ in that moment. I thought it was beautiful.

NSA ARCHIBONG
Nigerian, Toronto

God in my life, I believe, is always available to me. At all times. In my family and my work and in everything that I do.

I always feel that with that consciousness, certain things I want to do are not right—I always get that direction from God. On what to do. And how to do it. I always follow that direction.

And I do it right.

Most times. Sometimes I disobey. I get it wrong. But I listen to God for direction.

JINNIA BAIYE
Faith Community, Toronto, Young Adult Representative
I encounter God in my life in everything I do. At least I try.

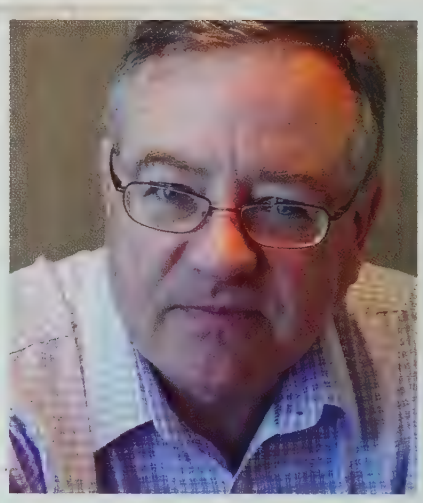
But I think that last time when I felt it was a real big thing for me—I'm in grade 11 and I had a test and I was doing something for my church and I stayed up really late that night. I did the test thinking I knew nothing but I put it in God's hands and when I got it back I got 93 per cent, which is really exciting.

DIANNE DOUGLAS
St. Mark's, Malton, Ont.
I felt God's presence in my life just a few moments ago during the worship service. The sermon (by Rev. Dr. Pat Dutcher-Walls) really spoke to me and I could feel the Holy Spirit moving through the room.

Outside of Assembly, in my daily life, I always feel touched by God but profoundly felt very called over the past few months to a new adventure.

I'm going to be running as a candidate in my area for the NDP in the upcoming federal election.

I struggled mightily with it because it's a huge commitment and there's a lot involved and I wanted to be sure that God was calling me to it as opposed to something I thought I could bring talents to.



DALE WOODS
Principal, Presbyterian College, Montreal
I grew up in a non-Christian home. My dad was a staunch atheist, didn't believe in the Church, didn't believe in God and thought it was complete foolishness. When I was in high school, I met some people who were committed Christians and I got involved with them, got involved with their families and I thought, these people have got something that I don't have.

That intrigued me and I pursued it more. My sense of what the secular world had to offer me was not very much: Get an education, work hard, buy some stuff and then die. These Christians seemed to have a sense of purpose, God was doing something in their lives; God was doing something in the world. Over a period of time I came to believe that was something I wanted in my own life. That was my conversion.

My father used to say to me that religion was all nonsense. I used to reply, yeah, maybe it is, but from what I can tell everything you believe in is also nonsense. At least a Christian faith has hope. I think I'd like to have something with hope.

BILL ELLIOTT
Leaside, Toronto

The last time I felt the presence of God might have been half an hour ago when I stood here before the General Assembly of the church and said out loud for the first time that I'm gay. I asked that my voice and the voice of people like me be included in the conversation from here on. That felt pretty close to God's presence somehow.

The prayer for me has happened mostly in conversation with other people. A groundswell seemed to begin last year with the overture from East Toronto and then other overtures and the conversations amongst the people who were supporting that. I think particularly of conversations with a friend from my home congregation of Vankoughnet. She enlisted me in conversation. So, it was the building support from other people. And that made me think the time was right.

ROGER MILLAR
St. Andrew's, Norwood, Ont.

I go to Costco every week with my wife. I stop to get a hot dog and a pop. I always say grace when I sit down. As I was praying one time I heard some derogatory comments about what I was doing, who I was talking to.

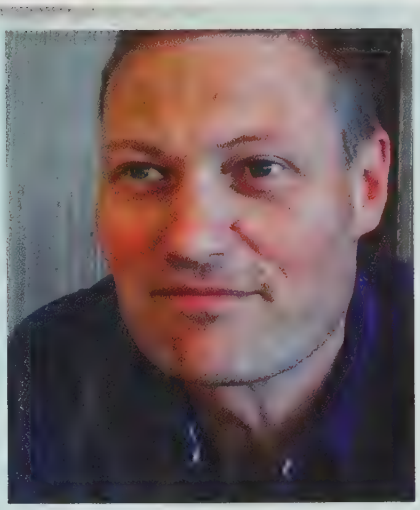
I ignored those comments but as I started to eat the person continued to ask questions. I said I was praying to God. And that's when a conversation began.

The next week when I returned it was to find this gentleman was there to meet me and to carry on our conversation.

In subsequent weeks it was more to broaden, not only in terms of the theology—we talked about God and Jesus—but also with other members of his family and some friends joining us.

So, we went from a one-on-one conversation to a meeting that four weeks later involved seven people. I'm not sure where this is all going to end. I'll be there next Friday to see if my friends are there and to continue.

What's interesting is that as this conversation has continued my new friends join me in prayer over the hot-dog and pop.



DAVID MOODY
Heritage Green, Hamilton, Ont.

I have been feeling God's presence constantly over the last couple of days. The Holy Spirit shows up when you're talking about ministry and the struggles we are facing, and all of a sudden you're like, there's God's presence, nudging us to pray for each other.

Today, yesterday, the day before, every day of General Assembly there's been that God moment.

A moment before GA that is fresh on my mind, is of a single mom coming into our church, just looking for a place to do something with her kids. No church background, just looking for a place for the kids to get connected.

And watching the church just love on that family. And watching the kids become excited about what's going on, and excited about Jesus and excited about this community.

And, me thinking, God you are so awesome, how did you do that? How did you just bring that family into our place and get connected just like that?

How did we all become family in just an hour and a half?

Business in Brief

At General Assembly.

Opening worship

In his sermon during opening worship, outgoing Moderator Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris spoke on Hebrews 2:5-13. He urged the gathered commissioners and guests to allow Jesus to be visible in the discussions and debates to come.

Farris's final act as Moderator of the 140th General Assembly was to install Rev. Karen Horst as Moderator of the 141st General Assembly.

Assembly Council

Assembly Council, the group which carries on the work of the General Assembly throughout the year, presented a plan to revise its membership and terms of reference to shrink the number of members on the council and change how members are appointed.

Sessions, presbyteries and synods will be asked to consider and comment back to the Assembly Council on its proposal by Jan. 31, 2016.

Other recommendations included translating Leading With Care, the church's policy on preventing and responding to allegations of sexual abuse and harassment, into French and reducing the number of Women's Missionary Society representatives on the Life and Mission Agency Committee from two people to one person. All the recommendations were approved.

Rev. Peter Bush of the Presbytery of Winnipeg asked "that the Assembly Council develop a plan to implement the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission related to church apologies and reconciliation throughout the committees, agencies and departments of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and the synods, presbyteries and congregations, and to report to the 142nd General Assembly on the plan and the progress made." The TRC released its recommendations on June 3 as part of a final event in Ottawa.

Clerks of Assembly

The report of the clerks began with a poignant video of Rev. Dr. Tony Plomp, one of the church's deputy clerks. In it he shared a diagnosis of stage four cancer, which is incurable, he said. He quoted the Heidelberg Catechism which he said he still remembers from childhood and which gives him hope:

"Question: What is your only comfort in life and death? Answer: That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and death—to my faithful Saviour, Jesus Christ."

Following the video, the Moderator paused to pray for Plomp in his living and his dying, and for the clerks.

Their report included six recommendations, all of which passed without debate.

Commissioner's Overture

Jonathan Dent and Peter Bush asked the assembly to look into the effects of the Supreme Court's decision to ban public prayer at the beginning of meetings of the city council of Saguenay, Que., and how the ruling "impacts our city councils, our governments at all levels and our own public prayers, and to enter into conversation with religious leaders of other religious traditions who share our belief that public prayer adds to civil society and the well being of communities." It was referred to the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee in consultation with Justice Ministries.

Committee on Church Doctrine

The assembly affirmed "that ordained ministers of churches which are members of the World Communion of Reformed Churches are permitted to preside at the Lord's Table at the discretion of the moderator or interim moderator of the relevant session."

Committee to Nominate Standing Committees

Intense debate erupted on Sunday afternoon when the Committee to Nominate Standing Committees brought forward the first of four recommendations.

The controversy surrounded a portion of the recommendation that would have replaced the name Rev. Mark Chiang with the name Rev. Jinsook Khang on the Committee on Church Doctrine. It passed with a vote of 113 in favour and 63 opposed. Twenty-seven commissioners asked to have their dissent to the decision formally recorded in the minutes of assembly. A motion was made to reconsider the matter.

The sederunt was adjourned and another started to adhere to the rules regarding reconsideration. After some heated debate, a motion to leave

Chiang's name on the slate passed by a margin of nine votes. Twenty-one commissioners registered their dissent.

Committee on History

Congregations are encouraged to celebrate Heritage Sunday on Feb. 21, and to contribute a $50 assessment to support the National Presbyterian Museum.

The 2015 history prize went to: *A Journey to the Western Sea: 100 years of the British Columbia Synodical of the Women's Missionary Society 1914–2014.*

The committee also extended its thanks to Rev. Peter Bush for his many years of service as editor of *Presbyterian History.*

Communications

Communications asked that "all congregations send feedback to the Communications Office on how positive changes can be made to PCPak by using the online feedback form available at presbyterian.ca" and asked church staff and individuals to subscribe to the PCConnect electronic newsletter.

Dealing with Overtures on Human Sexuality

The various courts of the church as well as denominational committees are "encouraged to engage in a year of prayerful conversation and discernment and Bible study on the topics of human sexuality, sexual orientation and other related matters raised in the overtures."

The church doctrine committee and Justice Ministries department are tasked with preparing a joint study guide to be posted on the church's website by the end of October, and congregations, sessions, presbyteries and synods are invited to share the results of their conversations with them by March 31, 2016.

The assembly spent two sederunts in table group discussions during which commissioners shared their own thoughts and feelings in a spirit of openness and grace. Moderator Rev. Karen Horst asked commissioners to "listen generously" and requested that the live stream of the assembly floor be turned off to ensure commissioners felt safe in expressing their opinions, concerns and struggles.

Dr. Rick Allen

Dr. Rick Allen will be retiring after 35 years of service with the PCC, working in community health and preventative care in Kenya. Allen has been instrumental in helping the church develop a new and progressive policy on HIV/AIDS; a policy that is recognized as one of the best on the continent. In Kenya, 1.5 million people are infected with HIV/AIDS, and Allen's care, work and contribution has resulted in better care for these individuals, improved access to services, and education and advocacy in churches and communities that has helped change opinions and dispel myths about the disease.

Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee

The committee expressed thanks to the churches, presbyteries and committees that studied and responded to *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* and *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes,* and commended the documents for ongoing study and use. The two documents were prepared by international ecumenical groups, and the World Council of Churches—of which the Presbyterian Church in Canada is a member—asked its member churches to consider them and provide feedback.

The second recommendation sought "to encourage Presbyterians to acknowledge, understand and appreciate the strengths of other faith traditions, and to help Presbyterians to live in good relationship with persons who belong to other religions."

International Affairs

The committee's report focused on numerous international issues, including religious persecution in India; the global situation of refugees, including the millions of people displaced by the conflict in Syria; the Millennium Development Goals (a 15-year global initiative to reduce poverty by the end of 2015); the global Arms Trade Treaty, including the 2014 $15-billion sale of light armoured vehicles to Saudi Arabia by London, Ontario-based General Dynamics Land Systems Canada; and an update on the shareholder dialogue between the PCC and Goldcorp regarding the Marlin mine in Guatemala. The report included 11 recommendations asking the Moderator of the 141st General Assembly to write to the pertinent governments and global bodies about these issues, as well as ›

asking the church to pray for all people being persecuted.

Justice Ministries

The report of the Justice Ministries department addressed a number of social justice issues including the effect of Canadian mining operations on indigenous groups, government action on climate change, and a report on payday loans. The moderator will write a number of letters to the Government of Canada on behalf of the PCC pertaining to these issues.

Korean Translation of Living Faith

In the final step required to create church law, the Korean translation of Living Faith was adopted as a subordinate standard of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Rev. Alfred Lee, a commissioner from the Presbytery of Western Han Ca and convener of the committee on remits, offered a special thanks for the denomination's support of the Korean version.

New General Secretary

The assembly endorsed the appointment of Rev. Ian McDonald, currently associate secretary of Canadian Ministries, to succeed Rev. Dr. Rick Fee as general secretary of the LMA.

McDonald said in his work he sees many good things being done across the church "and I don't know if we speak often enough about the good that's there in front of our eyes." He called for courage. "Renewal doesn't happen easily," he said. "Pilgrimage is not painless."

Pension and Benefits Board

A recommendation asking "that in support of equalizing pensions earned under the new 1.5 per cent career average earnings formula, section 8.4 of the Pension Plan be rescinded effective January 1, 2016," generated some debate.

It aimed to address a discrepancy between the pension professional church workers accrue under formula that came into effect Jan. 1, 2013, and the pension accrued by those workers who began their church careers in the 1980s and are grandfathered under a pre-1990 formula. The recommendation was carried in a close vote.

According to Tom Fisher, the board's convener, about 117 people will be affected by the change, and although the amount varies by each individual's earnings and the year they began accruing a pension, it would average about $800 to $1,000 a year. Ministers ordained before the 1990 cut-off will accrue future pensions at the same rate as those ordained afterward, he said.

Planned Giving

Associate secretary Herb Gale led a time of memorial to those who died in 2014 and left planned gifts to churches and ministries.

Presbyterian Church Building Corporation

Chair Siegfried Quickert said PCBC is "here to help congregations. If you need help, ask us!" Recent applications for financial assistance have been for making churches accessible; an often expensive endeavour.

He noted they currently have two applications for new churches. "That's wonderful! It's good news."

Presbyterian World Service and Development

The assembly agreed that "individuals, congregations and presbyteries be encouraged to take active note of PWS&D's Strategic Plan including Our Vision, Our Values, Our Mission, Our Theological Statement, and Our Priorities."

The assembly also adopted a moment of appreciation for Ken Kim, who served as director of PWS&D for nine years.

Rev. Dr. Rick Fee

Rev. Dr. Rick Fee has served the Presbyterian Church for 39 years in a multitude of ways, and will be retiring as General Secretary of the LMA this fall.

"The world needs the church. The world is yearning for the church," he said. "Our task is to share life, hope, peace, joy, and above all, love. For through that, Jesus will be known."

Special Committee on the Optional Elimination of Synods

The special committee recommended that synods be permitted to dissolve subject to approval of appropriate changes to the Book of Forms, and offered some proposed legislation to be remitted to presbyteries under the Barrier Act.

Theological Colleges

St. Andrew's Hall, Vancouver

The college named Rev. Dr. Robert Paul, a minister with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), as new dean of St. Andrew's Hall effective July 1. Paul takes the place of Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris, who is retiring from the position after serving since 2003. The College also announced the establishment of the Centre for Missional Leadership, with Rev. Dr. Ross Lockhart as director and Dr. Darrell Guder as the first Senior Fellow and Scholar in Residence. With the creation of the new centre, the Elder's Institute will be closed and its director, Rev. Dr. Roberta Clare, parting ways with the College.

Presbyterian College, Montreal

The College has been celebrating its 150th anniversary, and in 2014, established The Presbyterian College

Faces and places at General Assembly, including: Opening worship at Kerrisdale, Vancouver (bottom left); previous assembly moderator Rick Horst and this assembly's moderator Karen Horst (top right); Loly Rico and Janet Dench of Canadian Council of Refugees, (this year's EH Johnson award recipient), with Horst.

Leadership Centre. The Centre "intentionally walks alongside our church leaders, from young adulthood, through theological education, to the first years of congregational work, and onwards." Rev. Dr. Roland De Vries has been appointed as Director of Pastoral Studies for a three-year term effective July 15, at the rank of associate professor.

Minutes of appreciation for the life and ministry of Dr. Shuling Chen (who passed away in July 2014) and Rev. Dr. Ian Victor (December 2014) were adopted. Chen served the College for six years as Director of Educational Programs and as chaplain, and Victor as Acting Director of Pastoral Studies, respectively.

Knox College, Toronto

Knox College celebrated its 170th anniversary in 2014. Distinguished leadership awards were presented to persons whose ministry gave witness to the values espoused throughout Knox's 170 years as a theological school: teaching, learning, ministry preparation, hospitality, ecumenical engagement, and building cultural diversity. Also, a video conferencing classroom was installed in February. The new classroom is equipped with capabilities to bring experts to a classroom virtually, and, conduct distance education classes with sophistication and ease.

Women's Missionary Society

The National Presbyterian Women's Gathering will be a permanent fixture on the church's calendar, occurring every three years.

The WMS will continue to strengthen its focus on outreach initiatives, particularly through the newly created Presbyterian Church Women, which will be based on social networking.

For many more details on assembly business, please see ***presbyterianrecord.ca****. You can also watch the sederunts on the PCC's General Assembly livestream. The Presbytery of East Toronto will host the 2016 General Assembly.*

A lot of smiles at General Assembly. For hundreds more photographs please go to presbyterianrecord.ca to find our Flickr photostream.

Ecumenical and International Guests

MR. CHANDIMA GANGODAWILA spoke to the assembly about the Theravada Buddhist faith. Gangodawila became a monk at the age of 13 and is a Buddhist chaplain at UBC, as well as a school principal and scholar.

Gangodawila explained the notion of karma, a Sanskrit word meaning "action with intention." He explained that every action with intention causes retribution. Because of this, we have to be conscious of our actions, words and thoughts. He shared a saying to help explain the heart of Buddhist teachings: "If you walk, you need to walk with a broom because you have to sweep as you walk so you don't step on the tiny creatures."

REV. DR. GEORGE SABRA, professor of systematic theology at the Near east School of Theology in Beirut, Lebanon, asked those gathered for their prayers and support.

"I stand before you as a Christian from a region of the world ... in which Christians are disappearing," he said. "If Christian witness disappears from this part of the world, the gospel of love, peace and reconciliation will disappear, too. To remain and witness to the gospel in our lives in our words and deeds and institutions, we also ask for your support. We know from our experience of the past that we Christians of the Middle East cannot on our own remain and fulfill our mission without the support of the worldwide church."

REV. FR. KEGHART GARABEDIAN, pastor of St. Vartan Armenian Apostolic Church in Vancouver, shared information about the faith history of Armenia—a land referred to as the land of Ararat in 1 Kings and Isaiah, he said.

Armenia—both historical Armenia and the modern country—is full of churches, monasteries, chapels and statues. "Ninety per cent of historic Armenia is occupied by Turkey," he said. He spoke of the Armenian Genocide, the Ottoman government's systematic killing of Armenians 100 years ago, and Turkey's refusal to recognize it as genocide.

REV. PATRICK THEGU MUTAHI, deputy secretary general of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa in Kenya, and secretary of that church's Health Board, has worked closely with PCC missionary, Dr. Rick Allen.

He said Allen first arrived in Kenya when there were 600 people dying a day from HIV/AIDS. "It was a disease of mystery. They believed people died due to a result of sin, witchcraft and generational curses. But Dr. Rick Allen and the church worked together and developed a program that de-mystified HIV and AIDS. ... We feel greatly indebted to the PCC much as we are sad that Dr. Allen is retiring."

He noted that there is still much to be done in Kenya, particularly with insecurity. "We are under attack," he said, noting the massacre of 148 university students last April. "We need your prayers and support."

Welcome the Stranger

Canadian Council of Refugees receives the EH Johnson award.

The Canadian Council of Refugees, an organization "committed to the rights and protection of refugees and other vulnerable migrants ... and to the settlement of refugees and immigrants in Canada" was named the 2015 E.H. Johnson award recipient. The award is given to individuals or groups for being on the cutting edge of mission.

Janet Dench, executive director, and Loly Rico, president and herself a refugee, were present to accept the award.

"Just a week ago the government implemented changes to the Citizenship Act that make it easier to lose citizenship. So now even when we finally manage to become citizens we get the message that our status here is insecure, that we are being watched to make sure we behave ourselves. No matter what status you have, if you are not born in Canada you are considered the 'other.'

"The CCR is more than 35 years old—and in all this time there has been a serious problem of long delays for refugees to be reunited with their families.

"We have told you a bit about the issues that worry us. Some of them are probably familiar to you; some of what we are working on may seem technical and a bit remote. ... But we believe that the basic issue at stake is not technical and not only of concern to refugee advocates. The question is, 'Do we welcome the stranger?' and 'Are we proud to protect refugees?'

"Refugees will only be welcomed and protected when Canadians stand up and answer 'yes' to these questions."

—Loly Rico, Canadian Council of Refugees

See presbyterianrecord.ca for more.

FROM THE MODERATOR

Authentic Community

A glimpse of God's Kingdom at General Assembly. By Karen Horst

I write this note while flying over the beauty and majesty of the mountains of British Columbia, marveling at God and that another assembly is done. For months, people kept saying to me, "If you get elected, my prayers are with you since this assembly will be a difficult one." In the end, the 141st General Assembly proved to be one of the most personally moving assemblies I have ever attended.

The worship services were powerful, inspiring and gave us insight into how we might practice Christian community together. Our international, ecumenical and interfaith speakers, along with those who had been at the Truth and Reconciliation events, shared moving testimonies of our calling beyond our own denominational concerns. We are a Christian community far beyond being Presbyterian and we have much to learn from each other.

There blossomed a level of authentic, respectful, honest conversation beyond what I have experienced in a long time. I wish you could have seen the commissioners at their tables of eight, leaning in toward one another as they were directed to respond to questions regarding human sexuality. Many overcame their discomfort and anxiety for the sake of their group. I saw tears at some tables and others providing compassionate responses. When I had conversations with those who have a different position than mine, I was moved by their willingness to stand firm for what they believed but not in a way that made me feel condemned for my opposite view. Prayers were crafted, notes were taken, tears and laughter were spontaneously shared and together we began our denomination's year of "listening and conversation."

What will be very important this year is ... to step outside the lines of our own views to listen to our neighbour's perspective

Authentic community is open, raw and not without conflict. Several debates stirred strong feelings, but all the while we found a way to stay in community.

Phillip Yancey suggests we are inclined to surround ourselves with the people with whom we want to live, but in actual fact, that is more like a club or clique. Anyone can form a club, but it takes grace, shared vision and hard work to form a community.

We all had the sense this year that we were part of the early stages of an historic moment in our church, no matter what is decided in the future. What will be very important in this coming year is for congregations, presbyteries and others to talk, study and pray together to discern the will of God. To step outside the lines of our own views to listen to our neighbour's perspective even when they think very differently than us. We need to try to understand what others believe and why they have come to those conclusions. We will need to study God's word and the material that the church will provide to guide our thinking. We all love Jesus Christ and we all love the Scriptures. We all are part of the Reformed Church family. We must listen to one another and trust that God's Spirit is in our midst. In doing so, we will practice authentic community.

Jesus set the stage for us. He chose 12 unlikely people to follow him in his mission. They represented diversity of opinion, temperament and style. Jesus spent many a day trying to coach them. He refereed power struggles and helped them find courage. They did not always do him proud but they did, in the end, help birth the church. In our time and place we too are called to follow Jesus as we share our unique gifts and expertise. Together we will find the way to live out God's Kingdom now and into eternity.

Rev. Karen Horst is minister at St. Andrew's, Orillia, Ont.

WESLEY BATES/3INABOX

People & Places

Find more online at presbyterianrecord.ca

Photographs can be uploaded at presbyterianrecord.ca.

General Assembly edition!

OAKRIDGES

It's a family affair. Rev. Daniel Scott, St. John's, Bradford, Ont., was a commissioner to General Assembly this year. By what we can only imagine is coincidence, daughter Taylor was a Young Adult Representative for the Presbytery of Oakridges. Taylor is the youth leader at St. Paul's, Nobleton, Ont.

WESTMINSTER

The General Assembly is always a time for making new friends. This year's assembly, held at the University of British Columbia, was no different. These six gentlemen from numerous presbyteries were roommates for a few days in Vancouver, but the photo shows that they became friends as well. Pictured (l-r) are Ed Beattie, Harry Kelly, Bob Baxter, Blair Banks, Doug Simpson and Rob Adamson.

EAST TORONTO

You may need pen and paper to work this out: Four-and-a-half years old, Rachel Bisset has been to the past six General Assemblies. We won't help you with the math, but needless to say, she's a double PK: Both Mom (Emily) and Dad (Alex) are ministers in East Toronto.

THE OTHER SIX DAYS

Blurred Lines

Hipsters, LGBT bibles and 'open source religion.' By Bradley Childs

HIPSTER CHURCH

We've all seen them. They sit in coffee shops with travel case record players. They have old-school telephone receivers attached to their brand new iPhones. The men have lots and lots of facial hair and drink Pabst Blue Ribbon beer. Their females ride refurbished, fixed gear bicycles from the 1960s with wicker baskets on them and wear gigantic glasses. They are that new (non-90's grunge) flannel-wearing subculture and they are everywhere. And now Christian Today has a supportive little list to help you tell if your church is cool enough to be hipster, too.

FIND IT @ **christiantoday.com.**

MUSIC

I love the band Attalus. Theirs is a strange kind of melodic rock that appeals to a grown up purple-haired kid from the grunge era. But it's a lot more complex than that. Their new album is worth every penny. Into The Sea is dense and emotional. It's a 16-track record and is the first concept album offered by the band. It's also a lot softer than the last two. Interestingly, Attalus raised $10,000 on kickstarter to fund this two-year recording adventure. So why did this popular trio out of North Carolina have to scrape by on web donations when the last two albums sold pretty well? Oh, I'm glad I pretended like you asked. Because they gave all of the profits from the last album away to help orphans in Uganda. Great music, great guys.

FIND IT @ **attalusmusic.co and 7billionreasons.org.**

GAY-FRIENDLY BIBLE?

Touted as "a big, fabulous bible," the QJB proudly proclaims as their tagline "You can't choose your sexuality, but you can choose Jesus. Now you can choose a bible, too." The Queen James Bible (named after the rumoured bisexuality of King James I) is a specially produced version of the King James 1611 version with small changes made to eight specific verses in order to edit out any possible disparaging comments made about homosexuality. This bible also comes with a bright white dustcover with a picture of a cross constructed out of rainbows. Now to be clear, I'm not really sure why this exists. I'm not saying anything particularly bad about it but at the same time, the New Oxford Annotated Bible (fourth edition) in NRSV with apocrypha already exists. It includes left-leaning interpretive choices (much more carefully made) but also includes explanations for the choices in short commentary form. It comes from a minority position but is still the work of theological giants and words are not just chosen at random or cut from the pages like the one above. Plus, it doesn't have all those tricky thees and thous in it. So why get a QJB? Well, they do say it's a great showpiece!

FIND IT @ **amazon.com.**

christiantoday.com

RELIGION?

Psychologist Daniel Kriegman came to the conclusion that humanity should embrace a certain kind of religious-like thought in order to create unity. Inspired by the Linux operating system, he believes that all people are equal and divine as long as they are self-aware and as such all people deserve the right to create their own version of authority. His is a kind of philosophy and is certainly a new kind of religious experiment. Without an ultimate authority (like a bible for example), Kriegman was left with what he calls "open source religion" whereby all participants create their own shared morality as determined by popular opinion. His new religion is an experiment called Yoism where anyone can edit the community's views and understandings. What is "moral" and what is "not moral," for example, depends solely upon what the largest numbers of logged-in Yoians currently consent to be true.

FIND IT @ **yoism.org.**

Rev. Bradley Childs is minister at First, Regina.

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obituaries

Millar, Michael, FRPSC (1934-2014). Michael was born in Darlington, England and raised in Northallerton, North Yorkshire. He emigrated to Canada in 1955 and worked on farms in Ontario and Saskatchewan before going into the post office. Following early retirement, he worked in the Simcoe County Courts systems. Counting his service in the British Royal Engineers, Michael was proud to have served the Crown for 40 years.

He had long-time interests in railways and stamp collecting and he was both a Life Member and a Fellow of the Royal Philatelic Society of Canada. He also had an avid and active interest in Presbyterian Church history. Michael was a member of the Presbyterian Church in Canada's Committee on History for 26 years. He presented five papers at meetings of the Canadian Society of Presbyterian History and also served as its Secretary-Treasurer. An on-going project with which he assisted the Church Archives was The Presbyterian Church Index—the creation of a list of every Presbyterian congregation that has ever existed in Canada as well as of the ministers. The Committee on History recognized Michael's dedication to Presbyterian Church history during the 2012 General Assembly.

Michael was a member, elder and former Clerk of Session at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Barrie, Ont. As church historian, he conducted background research on the war dead of St. Andrew's and helped to organize the church's Remembrance Sunday services. Michael's knowledge of the minutiae of St. Andrew's history was unparalleled and during special services he took great delight in reading from an old pulpit bible: the King James' version, of course. His strong voice and faint English accent gave his readings of the Scriptures an extra bit of dignity, especially at Christmas and Easter.

Michael is survived by his wife, Dorothy and daughters Mary (Brian Kell), Ellen and Elizabeth.

Sayers, Grant Vincent, October 16, 1922-May 6, 2015. Organist at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Priceville, Ont., for 72 years, Grant passed away at Grey Bruce Health Services, Owen Sound, Ont., on May 6, 2015 at the age of 92 years. Best friend of Ruth Graham, Grant will also be sadly missed by his church family and his nieces and nephews and their families.

On Sunday, May 24, 1942, Grant played for his first service at St. Andrew's. For 72 years thereafter, Grant accompanied the congregation and choir, rarely missing a Sunday until his retirement in June 2014 due to ill health. In addition to playing at St. Andrew's, Grant filled in at other churches and played at community events.

Grant sang tenor with several quartets including The Wilcox Lake Quartet and The South Grey Gospel Quartet. He was a member of the Mount Forest Barbershoppers and a charter member of The Gospel Couriers Men's Chorus, which was organized in 1977.

A Service of Thanksgiving for the life of Grant Sayers was held at St. Andrew's on May 10, 2015 with Rev. David Nicholson officiating. Rev. Jim Wyllie, minister at Cooke's, Markdale, (where Ruth is organist) and Burns, Feversham, also participated. Memories of Grant were shared by long-time friend Ken Hincks, nephew Don Sayers of Fredericton, N.B., and niece Rosanne O'Neil of Cornwall, Ont. Grant was remembered as a humble man with a thankful heart. Special music was provided by Glen Wright, soloist, and The Gospel Couriers.

The congregation of St. Andrew's remembers with gratitude Grant's dedication and service to his church and community.

"Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord." (Matthew 25:21)

FOR THE JOURNEY

Our Connection to Creation

The lesson of a boy and his heron. By David Webber

"Hi ya, Grandma and Grandpa. Se ya." The blur going past us to the boatshed down by the lake was our grandson, Jacob. The next noise was the sound of the sliding door of the boatshed and in about 30 seconds Jacob was on the end of the dock. He was wearing his life jacket and supporting his favourite casting rod, his tackle box and dog on either side of him. He was fishing for squawfish otherwise known by its new politically correct name, the northern pikeminnow.

'Pikeminnow' is an odd choice for a name for a fish that was historically hugely important in the native food fishery and can grow to more than a dozen pounds in weight. Such is the way of political correctness that we would end up with a name that neither reflects the fish's size nor its history with First Nations people. But Jacob doesn't care what they are called; they have been the mainstay of his time spent at grandpa and grandma's house ever since he was a pollywog (otherwise known as porwigle or tadpole).

On this particular day, Jacob began catching pikeminnows hand over fist right off the bat. They varied in size from small minnows to about a foot in length. Each fish was quickly dispatched with a fish bonker that Jake had proudly carved himself in his pollywog days. They were then each carefully laid out on an old rotting log jutting out into the lake not far from the dock where he was fishing. Soon a huge and odd-looking bird began to do occasional and ponderous flybys just off the end of the dock. On this day, after laying out about 20 pikeminnows, Jake came into the house and later as the sun set, we all watched as Gronk the Great Blue Heron came and helped himself at the pikeminnow market on the old rotting log. The next morning, all the pikeminnows were gone and Gronk was waiting for Jacob at the end of the dock for a repeat pikeminnow performance. This procedure, or one like it, has been going on now for several years.

On one level, this story surprises me. As an amateur naturalist, I don't think it is very common for fish predators to feed on fish that they haven't caught themselves. And yet, for whatever reason, this particular predaceous great blue heron and this particular boy have an odd thing going on. I have no idea how it got started or what has perpetuated it, but it is something that both boy and heron seem to greatly enjoy. As Jake has blossomed into a teenager who absolutely adores the outdoors, I am not sure whether he now fishes for pikeminnows primarily for the fun of it or for the satisfaction he gets from continuing his longstanding relationship with Gronk.

On another level, this story does not surprise me. As unusual as it sounds, I know it is not really that uncommon. I also know that most wildlife biologists would write off what is going on between Jake and Gronk as merely food habituation, and I suspect would have something pejorative to say about it. No doubt there is an element of food habituation in the story, but there is something more going on. I could tell you other stories—like the loon that is nowhere in sight and within five minutes after we sit on the dock ›

ILLUSTRATION: BARRY FALLS

Perhaps this is why it has always been a part of my Christian faith to look for some kind of connectedness with the wild critters I share my life with

be bobbing away just a few meters off shore, obviously socializing with us; like the beaver that can't seem to resist a romantic campfire and Linda and I sharing a glass of wine beside it, swimming all the way across the lake to come and share in the ambiance; like the coyote who waits for the cowboy to mount his horse and daily ride out to check fences and cows, drifting alone almost unseen in the shadows for most of the day. There appears to be many odd connections between wild thing and humans that science will neither acknowledge nor explain but most people who have lived in the bush have experienced. Could there be a spiritual explanation, a biblical explanation perhaps?

Lately Linda and I have been enjoying reading Genesis together. Ever since coming to faith, the creation stories have deeply touched me. One of the most touching stories for me is about God deciding that it was not good for the first man to be alone (see Gen. 2:18-25). To negate this loneliness, God creates all the animals and birds and brings them one by one before Adam. What takes place is a special naming process. There are deep elements of intimacy and connectedness that I see here between God, humanity and animals, one that eventually finds its epitome in God creating Eve.

I for one cannot interpret this passage as it often is interpreted. I cannot interpret this story about God recognizing that it is detrimental for Adam to be alone and then creating all of the animals and birds and bringing them before Adam for naming as being some kind of divine failure because Adam does not find a mate amongst them. God does not make mistakes. Rather, I see this story-telling of a divinely inspired continuum in connectedness between animals and humankind that eventually finds its highest expression in the creation of woman and the sexual union between man and woman described as the 'two becoming one flesh.'

Perhaps this is why it has always been a part of my Christian faith to look for some kind of connectedness with the wild critters I share my life with. I am often pleasantly touched as I observe. And as I observe, even as I hunt and fish, I continually find this connectedness between myself and all wild things. It's not about me expressing dominion over creation when I keep a fish or take a game animal to feed my family with; it is instead connectedness and relationship, and so I pause and worship and give thanks as part of the process. In this, I find the practices of traditional First Nations people to be quite informative, especially as I look out my window through my Bible and ponder God, humankind and nature.

Rev. David Webber is newly retired from the Cariboo Presbyterian Church, B.C. His fourth book, When the Aspen Flowers *can be ordered through webberink@telus.net.*

"Perhaps we are enriched to recognize that Scripture through the provenance of the Holy Spirit has included a wide variety of voices. ...This quality of Scripture is so pronounced and so engaging, no matter how infuriating particular texts might be, that I wonder if it is in fact a metaphor for how we are to live with each other now, and how we are to conduct our intense and gracious engagement with God, the text and each other.

"Jesus draws a boundary not against those marginalized and vulnerable ones whom he always included, but against values that would commercialize access to God's holiness, and against those who would put themselves first and God on the margins."

—REV. DR. PATRICIA DUTCHER-WALLS,
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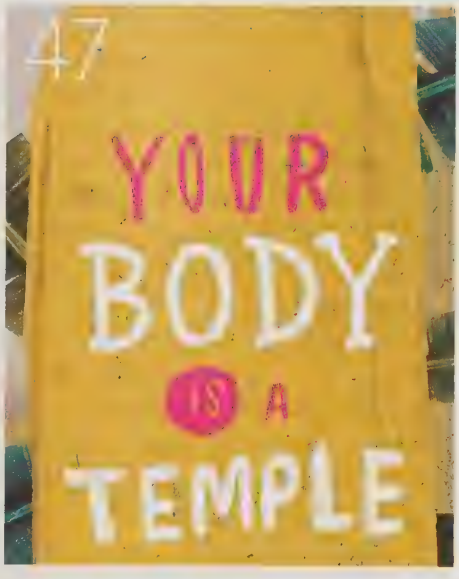
Truth and Reconciliation

The closing events of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission marked the end of the beginning. True reconciliation is a long, hard, difficult task for everyone—Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people alike.



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FOR THE RECORD

Reduced to a Number

We need to feel shame for the horror of residential schools.

By David Harris

Ben Pratt is squeezing a dirty old baseball cap between his beefy fingers. We are seated in a small room in the sparkling new administrative building on the Gordon Indian Reserve in Punnichy, Sask., about 150 kilometres north of Regina. Our interview has been intense, but so far without incident. ...

"Beginning when he was seven, Pratt was repeatedly raped by William Starr, a layperson who worked as the director of the student residence and was eventually made the administrator of the Anglican-run school. Starr was convicted in 1993 on criminal charges of sexually assaulting 10 boys between the ages of seven and 14, in incidents that took place from 1968 to 1984. Pratt later won a civil suit for the horrible abuse he suffered.

"... Memories of the abuse he suffered and the time he spent in prison bring Pratt to the edge of fury. 'If the federal government was an individual and you were that person, I'd kill you right now. Honest to God I would. I'd kill you.' These words make me suddenly and acutely aware of exactly how small the room is, and how slight the possibility that I would escape unharmed should this burly ex-boxer choose to wring my neck like he's wringing out his ball cap. I rise and slowly open the door. The banter from the hallway is reassuring for me and has a calming effect on Pratt.

"By the time I return to my chair, Pratt's eyes are downcast again. He seems embarrassed by his outburst. But before long he is speaking again, quietly telling me that as a student at residential school, he was known by a number rather than his Christian or surname. 'I wasn't called Ben or even Pratt. I was "38." I'll never forget that number.'"

Until that story, written by freelance journalist David Napier, was published in the *Anglican Journal* 15 years ago, few Canadians had any idea of the tragic events that took place in the Indian Residential Schools. And although I've read it many times, I still choke at the thought that someone about my age grew up in this country reduced to a number.

In 1999, I was editor of the *Journal*. The issue of residential schools was coming to the fore through lawsuits alleging terrible abuse being filed against the federal government and the churches. That summer, when I asked Mr. Napier to travel across the country over the coming months to record stories of what happened, neither he nor I had any real idea what he would find.

The stories he collected were published in May, 2000, in a 16-page special section, illustrated by archival photographs. They were heartrending.

Today, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recently concluded its work. And, like the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, which made some 440 recommendations, the TRC has 94 of its own.

So now what? In fact, so what? I'm not sure that many Canadians even feel guilty enough to wallow in it, not that wallowing does any good. Some degree of shame, however, is needed.

Until we feel enough shame to make us feel vulnerable, I'm not sure we can move ahead. But moving ahead is where we need to aim. We need to come to our aboriginal brothers and sisters with the same vulnerability we come before God: asking forgiveness and then asking what we can do now.

Much healing is still required.

The full text of David Napier's story can be found at anglicanjournal.com/articles/sins-of-the-fathers-6853

The TRC's 94 recommendations can be found at trc.ca. We've posted the ones related to churches on our website.

David Harris is the Record*'s publisher and editor.*

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The Suck-it-Up Culture

Re Ministers as a Mission Project, June

Cue the hurtin' music. Play the violin. Your piece on dysfunctional ministers was a bucket of cod-wallop. Spare the rhetoric. You'd think they were virgins with vapours.

Where did they get the idea ministry was going to be easy? Who told them it was a safe career? It isn't. It's one of the toughest jobs going.

Sooner or later every minister, male and female, goes into the trenches to combat with the devil and gets their ass kicked.

So spare us. Don't cry the blues. Ministry is great. And to whom much is given, much is expected.

ROD LAMB, KEEWATIN, ONT.

This is a well-rounded article expressing the very real mental health risks of ministry, and offers practical steps to responsible self-care. Like they say on the plane—put your own oxygen mask on before you offer assistance.

SANDRA SUTHERLAND, FACEBOOK

There are any number of published studies that clearly outline the affects of "compassion fatigue"—not just pastors. Granted, these realities represent a significant departure from the "suck it up" culture that many of us were raised in, and so it takes some re-orientation to understand them ... but that doesn't change the facts.

ALEX DOUGLAS, FACEBOOK ›

In my 38 years as a minister, I have seen some incredible human hurt because after the first responders leave we are usually the ones to pick up the pieces of the parent whose child was killed in an accident, drowned, sexually assaulted, stillborn, or died from an illness.

I don't think I am more "special" or "needy" than anyone else in the caring professions but in my years in ministry I have seen so much human hurt (and joy) that my heart has broken (and been uplifted), as I believe God's heart has been.

Clergy are not superhuman. They are ordinary, fragile people who are very aware of that fragility and who often, along with their families, pay a huge emotional cost because they care so much and believe that God calls them to do so.

NEAL MATHERS, FACEBOOK

Encourage Pastors

Re Co-Dependent Clergy, June

David Harris's editorial is truly what our ministers need. I try to encourage our pastors and have handed them this poem:

"And so, I find it well to come/ For deeper rest to this still room,/ For here the habit of the soul/ Feels less the outer world's control;/ ... And from the silence multiplied/ By these still forms on either side,/ The world that time and sense have known/ Falls off and leaves us God alone." (The Meeting, John Greenleaf Whittier)

MARGARET E LANGMAN,
ORO-MEDONTE, ONT.

Change and Extremism

Re Choosing Change, June

The hymns and songs we sing can also keep us from understanding and appreciating the whole sweep of Christian thinking. Too many hymns conclude with a dualistic verse about going to heaven after we die (see, for instance, *Sweet Hour of Prayer, All the Way My Saviour Leads Me, Away in a Manger*). A worship service which includes a rousing rendition of *I'll Fly Away* before the public recitation of "Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven," sends a mixed message about what the church actually stands for. Is it any great surprise

that people are confused?

IAN D. MCKECHNIE, ONLINE COMMENT

I'd just add one thing: There are people who assume and assert that their extremism is the only way to be Christian at both ends of the spectrum. The so-called "Progressives" can be dangerous fundamentalists, too.

LAURENCE DEWOLFE, ONLINE COMMENT

This type of church would be the epitome of apostacy. If we were to incorporate all of the changes suggested, we would be no different than our secular neighbours and just a social club, not a community of Christ followers.

DON HEGGIE, ONLINE COMMENT

Seriously? The article states:

—"Practicing greater inclusion—finding places for all kinds of people who live and think out their faith differently from us."

Is this not what the various denominations are all about? Allowing for differences of faith and biblical interpretation, but still maintaining the truth about the incarnation, atonement for sins (grace) and resurrection (hope)?

—"Actively and positively engaging the fastest growing religious group in Canada: atheists. This is the church that I expect and this is the kind of church that we need the presbytery to support, starting now."

Seriously? Wow! No offense, but I must have taken a wrong turn somewhere. If this is the new Presbyterianism, clearly, I am out of touch and in the wrong church.

WAYNE SCHALER, ONLINE COMMENT

A Long History of Messes

Re One Sunday Afternoon, July/August

The yarn started to unravel. An obvious advocacy move. Then, differing perspectives. One minority against another. Soon enough, a mess.

It's certainly not novel—not in scripture. Paul even tells Peter off to his face, because Peter resisted eating with the Gentiles after the conservatives came from Jerusalem and tried to re-impose purity codes. (Galatians 2:11-12)

Not novel, in the church, in Reformation and Counter-Reformation days.

More recently, in the protracted pro-Union, anti-Union perspectives

Now, another mess? Yes, and on a Sunday, the Lord's Day.

Might God be at work in and through, because of and in spite of our messes?

Do I hear a yogi-angel call out "Déjà vu, all over again?

Nevertheless, Thy will be done."

ELDON HAY, SACKVILLE, N.B.

In Community

Re Ordinary Radical, July/August

I follow with interest Amy MacLachlan's articles on renewal. But Amy, are you doing this with any others? Don't you know that only in and among others, in real community, can you find the strength and vision needed to really change? Jesus needed a community. He left a community, not a belief. The main reason we are failing as a church, as are most others, is that we offer mere belief and no community as Jesus knew it. We deserve our fate. Our pitiful attempts at renewal are doomed if community is not first found.

ANTHONY GIFFORD, STELLA, ONT.

All letters—taken from emails, by post, online comments and from the Presbyterian Record Community Facebook group—have been edited for space. There are many ways you can join the conversation, by pen or by keyboard. Share your voice.

100 YEARS
ehm
A community of compassion
A place of hope

Help Build a Community of Grateful Hearts this Thanksgiving

At Evangel Hall Mission, we work year-round to enable new beginnings for people. Some are living well below the poverty line. Some are homeless, socially isolated and alone. As holiday's can be difficult time for our participants, Evangel Hall Mission does its best to create a warm and friendly environment where people can feel loved and welcome.

This year Evangel Hall Mission will be inviting our Youth, Residence and Drop In participants to join us for a delicious Thanksgiving Dinner.

We are looking for sponsors for this special turkey dinner event. Your generous gift of $25, $50, $100, $250 or whatever you can afford will help us continue to nourish the bodies and souls of those who need us most.

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POP CHRISTIANITY

Desperate Rituals

Weddings are stuffed with meaningless symbols. By Andrew Faiz

In July I went to a Dionysian wedding—our usual circle of family and friends take us into the oddest corners at times. Dionysian?, you ask. Sure; that's what they said. It was an attempt to create a new ritual where confidence and faith in old rituals had disappeared. There were hints of a Greek temple in the outdoor setting; the ceremony was a mashup of poems, a little Neruda, a dash of e.e. cummings, some Greeks, some other stuff, perhaps from mid-70s rock songs, while a band improvised between Nick Cave and the Velvet Underground.

It was all wild theatre, an art installation. A small hint of hippy-dippy, without taking itself seriously. There was an Athena and two Maenads, pouring wine and spreading flowers. Silly and fun without any suggestion of religious tradition.

I'm sure you'd like me to say I was offended, but I wasn't. I've been much more offended at some church weddings. The stuff of the wedding and the wedding planner become greater than the moment of the marriage vows and the communal declaration.

I have sensed an incredible lack of confidence in the rituals of marriage in recent years. To be fair, some of those rituals deserve rethinking: A father handing his daughter over to a husband, for example, reeks of patriarchal chattel. Wearing white is a Victorian idea of both purity and wealth (only the rich could afford that much white). North American society has worked very hard (at times a bit too energetically) over the past 50 years to rid itself of some of those harsh 19th-century constructs of gender, sexuality and propriety.

While we chip away at those during a wedding, we find ourselves in an unformed landscape where we haven't quite found new symbols that could have meaning. So there are unity candles—the couple light a candle together; sometimes their parents also light the candle, sometimes siblings as well. Or, unity sand and salt ceremonies where different coloured sands, or different salts, are poured into one bowl; again, sometimes with other family members adding theirs.

I've seen handfasting in churches. A ritual that has Norse and Old English roots, a binding of hands to seal a contract. (Marriage is a corporate act, after all.) It somehow got picked up by neopagans and has become commonplace since the 1991 movie *The Doors*, in which Jim Morrison gets married in a Celtic pagan ritual.

Rituals morph over time; begged, borrowed, stolen, they take on different meanings in different contexts. They are organic; they change hue with time and setting. We want them, we need them, but we often forget to nurture them, to keep them alive. We force them upon each other. Generations embrace them and reject them; reshape them or bury them completely.

It was at one wedding I witnessed all three of handfasting, sand and candle, in a church, with a minister, rings and a block of Corinthians. So many symbols, as if rings, a prayer and a message weren't enough.

And they aren't any longer for many. Church itself is a ritual for many that has lost its meaning. And purpose. It's a thing people do; or give to their elders or to their fantasies of the perfect wedding. There is hypocrisy in that process, of course; but sincerely approached. Hypocritical sincerity, if you will.

So a Dionysian ceremony, made of papier mâché, a little wit and some glitter, was refreshing. A couple who had no time for religion and no patience for the standard alternatives, chose to celebrate their coupling with their own fresh creation. It was fun. Paperwork was registered with the government to make it real.

Andrew Faiz is the Record's *senior editor.*

BULLETIN

Community and World News

Wildfires devastated forests like this one near Weyakwin, Sask., shown on July 15, 2015.

CP IMAGES

IN THE NEWS

'How Can We Come and Help?'

People pitch in during wildfire evacuations in Saskatchewan.

By Connie Wardle

In July as over a hundred forest fires burned in northern Saskatchewan, more than 13,000 residents were forced to leave their homes in the largest evacuation in the province's history.

Rick Galloway, an elder at St. Paul's, Prince Albert, Sask., works for the provincial government as deputy commissioner of Emergency Management and Fire Safety and director of the Special Response Development Unit. His team was in charge of emergency management during the crisis, and responsible for transporting people to and from the evacuation centres.

"This was totally unprecedented and impacted every level of government and stretched our capacities right to the maximum," he said. "It's hard to describe how large scale this was so quickly. It went from one day we didn't know it was an issue until the next day when we were told we ›

had a mass scale emergency."

Armed Forces personnel and additional firefighters and equipment were called in to help combat and contain the fires. Meanwhile, communities in Saskatchewan and Manitoba opened their doors to evacuees.

In Prince Albert, the gymnasiums of a high school and a technical institute were turned into emergency shelters, and hotel rooms were booked up for high risk and senior evacuees.

Red Cross volunteers, including at least a few Presbyterians, helped out in a multitude of ways, including office work, assisting in the shelters and running materials back and forth.

"When there's an evacuation there are so many pieces that take hundreds and hundreds of people just to help out with all aspects," said Sharon Shynkaruk, another elder at St. Paul's and manager of corporate services with the province's Ministry of Social Services. She helped organize accommodations and support for the evacuees.

Some aboriginal communities also made space for people to stay. Norma Johnstone is an elder and treasurer at Mistawasis Presbyterian on the Mistawasis First Nation, and works with the Agency Chiefs Tribal Council, which brings together representatives from three First Nations: Big River, Pelican Lake and Witchekan Lake. Along with colleagues she helped to organize space in a hunting lodge on the Pelican Lake First Nation, about a two-hour drive northwest of Prince Albert.

About 55 people stayed there, either in the lodge or in campers or tents along the shores of the lake.

Members of the community pitched in $1,600 to help buy food and other supplies, and provided clothing, blankets, cooking utensils, and whatever else was needed.

"We were trying to make it like a home away from home atmosphere for them," Johnstone said. "We have an abundance of wild meat and deer and moose, and we can hunt at any time if it's to eat and to sustain ourselves. And this is what people were doing. They were hunting and bringing wild meat to our evacuees and they took them fishing and stuff, just what they'd do at home."

Galloway said he saw an outpouring of support during the crisis. "For example with the volunteers who stepped forward to fight fires, our lines literally were jammed with people who wanted to help, people who wanted to come not only from Saskatchewan, not only from the Prairie provinces, not only from all of Canada, not only all of the U.S., we had people who wanted to come all the way from Australia who were phoning us saying how can we come and help. For someone like me who's been involved in public safety for a lot of years it was really powerful."

But that kind of overwhelming response can pose difficulties, too.

"One of the challenges with managing volunteer resources is making sure people's good efforts are not wasted," Galloway said. "You can have a massive outpouring of volunteers and then not be able to handle it. And it's the same with materials."

There were some cases, he said, where well-meaning people and groups donated things like food and used clothing that didn't really meet a need. Food was already available in the evacuation centres and although some types of clothing were useful—like bathing suits so children could go swimming in the city's pools—much of it was unnecessary.

If you want to help out in an emergency situation, start by contacting the main group in charge of the response efforts, suggested Shynkaruk. That usually means the Red Cross. Find out three main things: What is needed? When is it needed? And where is it needed? And, of course, monetary donations can always be put to good use.

Connie Wardle is the Record*'s senior writer and online editor.*

UCC VOTES TO DIVEST FROM FOSSIL FUELS

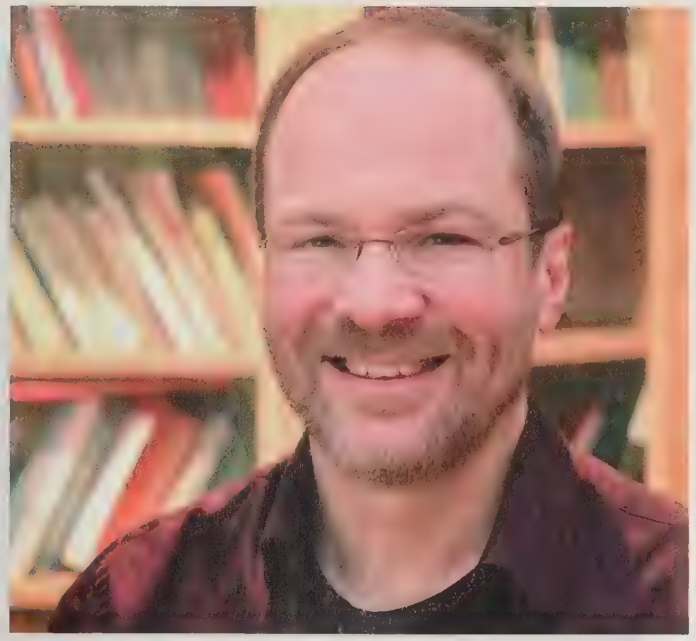
Commissioners at the highest court of the United Church of Canada urged the denomination's foundation and General Council executive "to take active steps to sell their holdings in the 200 largest fossil fuel companies" and reinvest the assets in renewable energy.

The decision was endorsed by 67 per cent of the church's General Council, which met in Corner Brook, Nfld., in August.

The UCC's foundation holds about $2.8 million in fossil fuel investments (about five per cent of its portfolio) and the treasury holds about $5.9 million (about 4.7 per cent of its portfolio).

The largest Protestant denomination in Canada joins a number of church bodies divesting from portions of the fossil fuel industry including the Church of England, the Church of Sweden and the World Council of Churches. *—CW*

NEW DIRECTOR FOR PWS&D



Guy Smagghe has been appointed director of Presbyterian World Service and Development effective Sept. 1.

Smagghe has served with the church's relief and development agency for 18 years, most recently as senior program coordinator. He has also worked as government relations officer for the agency, securing grants and funding from government sources, and as PWS&D's representative on the board of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. He has a master's degree in the field of political economy of international development from the University of Toronto and speaks three languages.

"I think the main challenge initially will be getting to know the constituency better and finding creative and effective ways to share the life-transforming stories of our work," he said of his new role. "There may still be a lot of Presbyterians out there who may not see PWS&D as their agency of choice when it comes to development and relief."

Through its membership in organizations like CFGB, PWS&D can "multiply resources for food aid in the world unlike any agency that is not a church-based agency can do," he said.

"The hope is always to make the biggest difference possible in the lives of the most marginalized and impoverished people so that they can live lives with dignity. And that's the reason why we're here."

Smagghe replaces former PWS&D director Ken Kim who in March moved to a position with World Renew, the relief and development agency of the Christian Reformed Church. —*CW*

PHOTO COURTESY OF PWS&D

David Sherbino Wins Word Guild Award

Rev. Dr. David Sherbino was awarded the 2015 Word Guild award in the instructional book category for *Living, Dying, Living Forever: Spiritual Reflections on the Journey of Life.*

Sherbino—professor of spirituality and pastoral ministry at Tyndale University College and Seminary, Toronto, and minister of Cornerstone Community Church in Kleinberg, Ont.—was recognized by the Christian writers' organization for crafting a book about death and life that captures the reader in its hopeful and light-filled perspective on eternity.

The urgency of working through the realities of death became apparent to Sherbino in conversation with his mother who at the time was facing the hardships of dying.

"It was evident she was dying, and I asked her if she was afraid to die," Sherbino said. "She told me to keep asking her questions of that sort because it was important and healing for her to explore these questions she had never addressed."

As a minister of 30 years, Sherbino found himself dealing with many people and families going through seasons of death—a period he felt many people had not felt comfortable even conversing about.

"I have seen families playing out a charade when their dying family members are in the hospital—a charade that the person will be back to normal life in no time," he said. "I didn't feel like that was okay. I think it is important to have honesty—to talk about the reality of life. It not only brings closure to life itself, but it also takes away some of the fear and makes death somewhat less stressful. These conversations also allow us to live every day with greater gratitude."

An excerpt from his book will appear in the October issue of the *Record*. —*Laura Heming*

OP-ED

Levelling the Field

The Pension and Benefits Board explains a General Assembly decision.

By Cam Bigelow

The Pension and Benefits Board serves the Presbyterian Church family by managing the pensions of ministers, members of the diaconate and staff of various church institutions. It also manages the medical and dental plan for both active and retired members eligible for the benefits of that plan.

The pressures on the pension plan after the 2008 economic downturn in the economy required us to make adjustments. One such adjustment meant reducing the rate at which retirement benefits are accrued by members. This was agreed to by the 2012 General Assembly.

This took effect on January 1, 2013. For the vast majority of the active members of the pension plan this meant that the rate of accumulating pension credits began to be calculated at 1.5 per cent of each year of service governed by a Maximum Qualifying Income. The MQI in itself helps to create a level playing field so that those earning much larger incomes can only earn pension credits at the same level as most with lesser incomes.

In fulfilling its duties, the Pension and Benefits Board brought before the General Assembly a request to create a more equitable pension plan for all 700 active members of the plan by setting the rate at which future benefits will be accrued at the same level for all active plan members beginning on January 1, 2016.

With the action of this year's General Assembly, the affected 115 active members who entered the pension plan prior to January 1, 1990, who had been allowed to continue using a much more generous rate for calculating pension benefits, will participate in the pension plan at this same level with all 700 active members.

However, no benefits realized before January 1, 2016 are in any way affected. Simply put, all shall share in contributing at a similar percentage and all shall receive benefits calculated in a similar way.

Cam Bigelow is convener of the Pension and Benefits Board.

The Church of St Andrew and St Paul *is seeking a lead minister*

We are a vibrant congregation with members from a range of backgrounds and cultural communities located in the dynamic downtown of Montreal. We emphasize Biblical preaching which relates the gospel of Christ to contemporary life. Our service is traditional and is supported by a ministry of music which is known throughout the city for the excellence of the choir and organ performance.

We have a Christian Education specialist and a full program of activities, both within the congregation and in outreach. We are well-served by a capable and dedicated lay leadership. As a large, downtown congregation we are seeking a minister gifted in the areas of leading worship, preaching and teaching, with strong pastoral and relational skills. More information about our congregation and a copy of our profile can be found at www.standrewstpaul.com. Candidates must be, or be eligible to become, ministers within the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Interim Moderator: The Rev. Dr. Dale Woods, 3495 University St., Montreal, QC H3A 2A8
Tel. 514-288-5256 ext 201. Email: dwoods@presbyteriancollege.ca

There's more online!

Check out **presbyterianrecord.ca** for a short piece on Galilee Presbyterian, Toronto. A car crashed into their building in July. And at church offices, the Stewardship and Planned Giving departments will merge on Sept. 1. Read Connie Wardle's story for more on the change.

Coming next month!

Watch for a story about a new book from Rev. Matthew Brough of Prairie Presbyterian, Winnipeg. *Del Ryder and the Crystal Seed* is the first installment in his adventure series for young readers.

Faith.

Deepening your relationship with God

ISTOCK

LEADERSHIFT

Kingdom Cottage

Growing and learning.

By Ross Lockhart

Summertime, and living is easy—especially at the cottage. Swimming. Boating. Fishing. Picnics. Sunsets. Perfect. Depending on where you live you might call your getaway by a different name—camp, cabin or lake. But no matter what you call it, there is a shadow side to cottage life that is best done on rainy days: repairs.

When you have a cottage on an island you learn quickly never to call an expert to fix something you might be able to fix yourself. By the time an experienced tradesperson steps off a boat, you are already a couple of hundred dollars poorer. Owning a cottage on an island turns ordinary people into Macgyver-like characters, willing to rig up solutions to any problem with duct tape, dental floss and chicken wire. After all, to quote the great Canadian philosopher Red Green: ›

LEADERSHIFT, continued

Like an uncle making repairs under the family cottage, God could get the job done quickly without any help, but God chooses to engage another partner in order to impart knowledge and wisdom through the experience of co-creating

"If the women don't find you handsome, they should at least find you handy."

During my teenage years I spent a lot of time on an island, under the family cottage playing "Mr. Fix-it" with my Uncle Jack. It was under that property that I learned everything from basic plumbing and electrical, to how to fix a sinking building with a well-placed telepost. What I discovered, much to my naive teenage mind, was that summer after summer my Uncle Jack didn't actually need me under the cottage at all. Sure, it helped to have an extra set of hands around on a work project. What I figured out was that my Uncle Jack wanted to teach me the things that he had learned. Always the educator and principal, my uncle saw an opportunity to pass on his wisdom, while watching me grow with skills and practices needed for a full and abundant life.

In a similar way, following the risen Christ and discovering an answer to questions like "Who am I?" and "Who is Jesus?" and "Who am I in Jesus?" means enrolling in the school of Jesus we call the church. As so many return to the classroom this fall, we are reminded that as Christ followers we are always enrolled in the school of Jesus.

Of course, in the Reformed tradition we place a high value on the sovereignty of God. To say it directly, God is in charge. No committee meetings, no public opinion polls, no worries about re-election. God acts. From Creation through the Fall to Redemption, we acknowledge God at work in the world, bringing this cosmological experiment to a proper and joyful consummation in God's own time.

The soteriological puzzle includes the curiosity that what God could accomplish by His own sovereign power, God chooses to partner instead with fragile, fallible human creatures. Strange. Sounds like a risky plan to me. Like an uncle making repairs under the family cottage, God could get the job done quickly without any help, but God chooses to engage another partner in order to impart knowledge and wisdom through the experience of co-creating. Again, a risky plan unless, of course, God simply delights in this relationship with humankind. A risky plan unless God as covenant maker and covenant keeper continues to reach out to humanity through sheer grace. A risky plan unless God is motivated by the desire to include humanity within the revelation of God's own experience of mutual, self-giving love found in Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Like an uncle reaching out to a nephew struggling to make sense of the world, God reaches out to humanity and desires to have us pattern our lives on His unforced rhythms of grace. God meets us in our brokenness, accepting us just as we are while having no intention of leaving us the way He found us. Discovering who and whose we are as human creatures means that before we know it, we are enrolled in the school of Jesus we call the church, clunking around in dark corners and learning how to mend creation.

Missional leadership today takes seriously the need for us to claim our identity as disciples or active learners, not simply consumers of religion. There is no outsourcing of baptismal vows to paid clergy in the church that God is creating. Our core identity as students enrolled in the school of Jesus we call the church, means that every aspect of our lives is governed by our relationship with the Headmaster Christ. This is not simply about belief. It is much deeper than that. Anyone can say they believe in God. Big deal. Even the devil believes in God. The real question is, do we trust in God? Do we turn our whole lives over, daily, to God in joyful obedience to God's will as revealed in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit? It sounds a little bit like, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Enrollment in the school of Jesus requires not only belief in God but trust in God to direct and provide for us as we practice our resurrection faith.

The Bible teaches us that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself and not counting our sins against us. Good news, indeed! God has a renovation project on the go here on earth. Through empty cradle, cross and grave we are part of the family and there is a role for us to play in restoring what is broken by sin. What a blessing it is in mission communities from coast to coast to get under the kingdom cottage with God and discover what He has to teach us! I can't wait to get going, can you?

Ross Lockhart is associate professor and director of the Centre for Missional Leadership at St. Andrew's Hall, Vancouver.

ISTOCK

RENEWAL

A Time of Discernment

And a time for prayer. By Fred Stewart

Human sexuality issues are front and centre for the Presbyterian Church in Canada. There will be study and dialogue at every level of the church and eventually decisions made concerning the numerous overtures forwarded to our General Assembly this past June.

There will be votes by commissioners in the coming years together with votes in sessions and presbyteries. The majority will express their will on the church. It is the way we are governed.

In the meantime, we are in a time of discernment. There will be study guides provided this fall by the joint efforts of the PCC's Justice and Church Doctrine committees: work given to them by this past General Assembly. There will be small and ›

RENEWAL, continued

But I also believe that the church has at most times failed to practice Christ-like love and understanding to the LGBTQ individuals and communities in our midst and at our doors

large gatherings promoting everything from mutual understanding to a particular position on this debate. There will be many talking about "what ifs" as they try to picture the significance of things either staying the same or changing radically over the next few years in the life of our denomination.

I need to let you know that there continues to be passionate discussion at every level of the Renewal Fellowship's constituency and leadership. We have also had input, sometimes very passionate input, from some who hold views contrary to the fellowship's orthodox position.

In this period of time, how do we live out our call to seek God's renewal for us all? I would humbly respond that just like four years ago when I came to this ministry, our call is to serve God and our denomination the best we can.

Our belief is that encouraging, organizing, and facilitating prayer is our clearest priority.

We continue to serve as agents of connection. We exist to connect the unconnected. We seek to encourage the discouraged and share resources with those who need help and healing. We also serve to connect like-minded people together. This has been accelerating over the past months as many who hold orthodox views seek to connect and share with others of similar understanding.

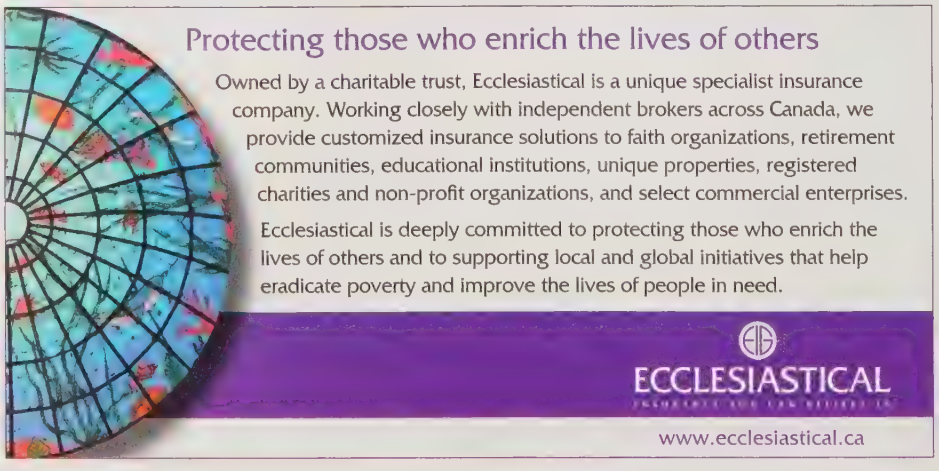
In the meantime, I continue to minister to many of our ministers and am looking forward to more encouragement road trips in the next couple of years. I am already seeing and hearing higher stress levels and more profound isolation as some congregations and presbyteries have experienced heightened conflict. Remember to pray for all our ministers and congregations.

Lastly, there is an elephant in the room. Many of the Renewal Fellowship membership—and I might add, many who do not align themselves as fellowship supporters but do hold orthodox views—have expressed their expectation that we do more to support the status quo and resist the changes sought. When we try and drill down to determine what is expected, it takes many forms. Some say it is not clear where we stand. Some believe we should be louder and tougher. Some believe that these issues should command all our time and resources.

I can't speak for everyone. I can only speak for myself. I hold orthodox biblical views with respect to marriage and the totality of human sexuality. I also confess my own brokenness and the need for healing and forgiveness in my life. Also, I believe there is a greater issue that is at play today with respect to scripture, doctrine and culture. But I also believe that the church has at most times failed to practice Christ-like love and understanding to the LGBTQ individuals and communities in our midst and at our doors. I am hoping this time in the church will result in huge gains in our mutual understanding and love.

Whether you agree with me or not, please remember me in prayer. I seek to serve the God who calls me, the denomination that adopted me, and the ministers who trust me for community and connection. There is so much at stake. There is so much to do.

Rev. Fred Stewart is executive director of the Renewal Fellowship and minister at St. Andrew's, Bolsover, and Woodville Community churches.



ISTOCK

PROGRESSIVE LECTIONARY

At Home in the Pulpit

You'll never know where the preaching life might take you.

By Laurence DeWolfe

I preached my first sermon on Palm Sunday, 40 years ago. I'll never forget that sunny day in First Presbyterian Church, Stellarton, N.S. How could I forget that sermon? Like most first-time preachers I believed I had to say everything I thought could be said about the topic. I preached the whole gospel. I berated the congregation for not being Christian enough. Adolescent rages and religion don't mix well. Especially in the pulpit.

I've been preaching for 40 years, counting the last 15 when I've been teaching preaching. For six years I've been teaching full time and preaching occasionally. I've fought the occasional preacher's need to try to say everything there is to say about a text, to preach the whole gospel at once. I tell students they don't have to find the last word, just the best word they can come up with for a place and a time. They should remember they're not the first, ›

Moving from pulpit to pulpit made me bold, too.
So, I thought, why not take a chance?
On one of those Sundays I preached for a call!

nor will they be the last preacher to take a crack at a text or a topic. And in their preaching lives they'll have many opportunities to do the best they can. Teachers don't always take their own advice.

During the spring of this year I preached eight weeks in a row. I highly recommend a stretch like that for everyone who teaches in a school for ministry. I preached in Presbyterian churches and on campus. Mostly I preached to Baptists. All receptive, eager people who leaned into the Word with me. Especially those Baptists! I recovered my first love for the gospel. My love of words and the Word. I had almost forgotten the incredible privilege of standing in front of a congregation of any size and speaking to, for, and with them.

Moving from pulpit to pulpit made me bold, too. So, I thought, why not take a chance? On one of those Sundays I preached for a call! The experience was electric. Spirit-charged. Later this fall I'll leave the best job I've had so far in my preaching-teaching life and take on a new challenge with Glenview Presbyterian Church in Toronto. I'll get to practice and preach what I teach.

It will be tough to leave my Nova Scotia home and my second home at Atlantic School of Theology. I'll miss the churches where I've been welcomed to preach occasionally and have heard such great preaching, especially First Baptist and St. John's United. I've learned a lot from the people who have preached and been pastors to me in Halifax. I'll have new opportunities to put what they've taught me to work in Toronto.

I know a lot of lay preachers read this column. A few ordained do, too. Not all Presbyterians. I'm sorry I don't have anything about a lectionary text for you this month. I promise to get back to business in October. This month I want to ask you something. Do you realize how lucky, how blessed you are? For a Sunday at a time, or months and months of Sundays, congregations of God's people trust that you will have a word for them. They wait for you to speak words that will break God's Word open. Accept and treasure the gift.

In just one year my preaching life has taken me to a conference in India, a United Church presbytery in Yellowknife, and an historic Methodist pulpit in Bermuda. I've been in pulpits across Canada, but always as a guest. I look forward to preaching every Sunday with some apprehension. But, good sermon or bad, I'll be home.

This preaching life you and I are called to isn't easy, but it's the best life we can live. I hope you know that. I hope you're at home in the pulpit.

Rev. Dr. Laurence DeWolfe teaches at Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada

EXECUTIVE POSITION WITH THE LIFE AND MISSION AGENCY

The Presbyterian Church in Canada, through the Life and Mission Agency, is inviting applications for the executive position of Associate Secretary, Canadian Ministries at the national office in Toronto.

The Associate Secretary will actively assist congregations and presbyteries in finding and using human, online, printed and financial resources to enhance the mission and ministry of all constituencies of our denomination.

The deadline for receiving applications is September 30, 2015.

Find the full job application online at
presbyterian.ca/jobs

ISTOCK

ORDINARY RADICAL

Back to Basics

Remembering our call to community. By Amy MacLachlan

I'm sitting on a beach in Northern Ontario, looking out on Lake Superior. The beach, of course, is beautiful. The sand bright and hot from the morning sun. The lake so cold I don't dare dip my toe. The only sounds are those you'd expect in such a place—the shore-kissing waves, the whispering trees, the occasional squaking gull.

What there isn't, is people. My husband and in-laws have taken daughters and nieces for a few hours, so there's no gaggle of squealing girls (all seven and under) disrupting the peace of my perfect sandy spot.

It is quiet here. It is contemplative. It is perfect for rest, for reflection, for silence. It is perfect for listening. ›

SEPTEMBER'S CHALLENGE

Community

Get back to basics. Focus on Shane Claiborne's commitment to community, and think about ways to follow in his footsteps, together with others. What can we do, along with others to reach out? What can we do to strengthen bonds with each other? Is there something we can learn about together that will inspire us to work towards change? Perhaps we can think of one small thing we can do each day to help build community where we live. From there, start thinking about how you can build community not only with neighbours and people you know, but also those who may be forgotten. Good luck!

But while quiet times are integral to our mental, emotional and spiritual well-being (be sure to read future blog entries for more on that), removing yourself from a solitary space to come together in community is equally important.

I've been doing some reading lately on the need for human connection—something that takes me back to my university days and Psych 101—and there's no shortage of material on the fact that we are made for social interaction. In a 2013 *Scientific American* article entitled "Why We Are Wired to Connect," scientist Matthew Lieberman argues "that our need to connect is as fundamental as our need for food and water."

The Bible also speaks of this need for community, and the call to live in community with others (even those on the outskirts or those who are different from us). Psalm 133:1 notes, "How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity," and at numerous points throughout scriptures, we are reminded to bear each other's burdens, comfort one another, and encourage each other "toward love and good works." (Hebrews 10:24)

Howard Macy, in an article entitled, "Community: God's Design for Growth," states that, "Christian community is the place of our continuing conversion."

It isn't any wonder then that I recently received an email from a reader in Stella, Ont., asking if I was pursuing my year of becoming an "ordinary radical" alone, or in the company and support of others.

"Don't you know that only in and among others, in real community, can you find the strength and vision needed to really change?" he wrote.

He noted that Jesus "left a community, not a belief," and that the Church is faltering because we have forgotten that. (You can read the full letter in our Letters section this month.)

He's right, of course.

I began this blog with a focus on community—that was the very point (re-visit my very first column from January to see what I mean!). It is, after all, the thesis to Shane Claiborne's argument. That it is only in community, and the creation and enjoyment of it, that we truly know our neighbour and want to do all we can to help those who are struggling; to make real, lasting change. It is in and through community where biblical values of charity and goodwill, of justice and peace, of sharing and kindness, truly come to life.

Interestingly though, despite this basic need, Claiborne admits, "that doesn't mean community is easy."

"For everything in this world tries to push us away from community, pushes us to choose ourselves over others, to choose independence over interdependence, to choose great things over small things, to choose going fast alone over going far together. The simple way is not the easy way."

Since it's September—the unofficial "new year" for many of us—I figure it's time to get back to basics. I've lost my way; trying to do things on my own, lamenting the fact that I have so little time to do anything at all, and criticizing those who aren't stepping up to do more.

This isn't what I'd intended.

So thank you, kind reader, for taking the time to send me an email, to remind me what this is all about. I have indeed been doing some projects with friends; but there are definitely other things I could be doing to encourage and inspire others to help out along with me (and to inspire and encourage myself!). To celebrate successes and share in failures. To build the community both within the church, and outside of it. And dream up new ways to connect even more.

As nice as this beach is, peaceful and restful and quiet (all wonderful things for an introvert!), I must go back to real life; to family, to friends, to community.

Amy MacLachlan is the Record*'s managing editor. Follow her blog at presbyterianrecord.ca.*

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Life

Thoughts and inspiration for your daily life

Residential school survivor Lorna Standingready is comforted by a fellow survivor during the closing ceremony of the TRC.

THE CANADIAN PRESS/SEAN KILPATRICK

REFLECTION

At Last an Understanding

A morning of primal fears and thrills. By Allen Aiken

Just as soldiers who went to fight did not hear of the Holocaust until after they returned, so we who were raised in Canada were never taught the story of residential schools. Watchers will know that, in a moment, we saw both our church and our nation through a new set of eyes. So it was on the second of June that Canada got a chance to see into itself, into its own history, as it had never done before. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission delivered its report. The poignant words and the magnetic voices of Justice Murray Sinclair and Marie Wilson spoke in real time, which was at 8 a.m. here on the Pacific. Some had to have their feet on the floor three hours earlier in order to be with the 350 that gathered, fully hushed, to hear the report.

The previous Sunday, 800 of us had gathered at an ecumenical service for Anglican, Presbyterian, ›

United, Roman Catholic and Baptist congregations. Rev. Mary Fontaine, a minister who is both Presbyterian and First Nations, together with three of her native elders, extended to all the welcome of the Coast Salish peoples. St. Andrew's-Wesley United Church, Vancouver, the building housing the service, is on "the unceded territory" of the Coast Salish people. In other words, the land on which the building sits was never purchased from its first residents.

We were a never-before-seen mixture and a far larger crowd than usual. Both a Christian understanding of God and a First Nations feel for the spiritual nature of the earth were combined in such a way that both were honoured. Nothing of worship was same-old, same-old; the experience was re-orienting. It was a sacred celebration of something that was going to burst upon all of Canada two days later.

It is an awakening experience to see your country (a nation that can evoke deep pride) and your church (a place that seems so reviled of late) in a way that demands a rethinking of both.

Before the service began, people gathered in a sunny courtyard across the street in the complex of a business tower that represents the city's secular power. It is said that the downtown area of Vancouver is the most densely populated square mile in our country; it looked it that day. The sacred fire was lit, hidden not in a building but burning for the city to see. There were several hundred witnesses, some of whom were passersby on the busy sidewalk.

In the Aboriginal heart, the sacred fire evokes the sunshine warming Mother Earth. It calls forth a time for healing and a space into which the four winds can blow, reconfiguring relationships.

After the ecumenical service, the people returned to the city square. They participated in what's called the blanket exercise. Narrators tell the story of how First Nations people experienced the advent of European settlers. Blankets are used to help visualize territory. Slowly their available land diminished—their wealth!—and then they began to diminish, no longer needed by the new people.

Most of the participants were of European stock; some were Asian. In their faces one could see the horror of a dawning realization. There was not a sound from the few First Nations people who were there, but I saw a handkerchief go to the eye from time to time and an arm reach out from one to the other in embrace. The pain was palpable. Now, at last, I get it!

On this day of reconciliation, two constructs were dashed. The one was how I see and relate to the "Indian" I meet. It used to be that I met him or her on the street. Today we are in a church whose doors, we'd both been convinced, we'd never ever darken!

The other construct is how the downtown churches of Vancouver were transformed as they responded to the need for the reconciliation of insiders and outsiders. They were, themselves, changed. Never in my life had I imagined that these self-contained downtown worshipping communities would ever mingle during the act of worship. In 2015, it has happened.

The gargantuan proportions of what flowed out of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission made denominational politics look so very petty, yet the larger reconciliation also changed the churches that participated in it.

The Church is often portrayed as a ship. Anyone who lives on the coast knows the experience of travelling aboard a vessel on the wind-swept sea. It can blow so hard that one must grasp the rails with both hands, fearing that hair and clothing may be torn from the body. It stirs primal fears and primal thrills. During that hour in St. Andrew's-Wesley, there was such an uncovering. One could be blown overboard.

Maybe that's the upset that all those crowds in the ancient land experienced when Jesus spoke to them.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Allen Aiken lives in Vancouver.

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ISTOCK

CURRENT ISSUE

Religious Freedom, Secular Values

Several court cases question the rights of the religious.

By Andrew Faiz and Amy MacLachlan

Two recent superior court decisions have stated that while religious institutions have the right to their beliefs, the propagation of those beliefs must be framed within secular standards.

In its decision regarding a Jesuit school in Quebec, the Supreme Court stated in March: "These shared values—equality, human rights and democracy—are values the state always has a legitimate interest in promoting and protecting. ... Religious freedom must therefore be understood in the context of a secular, multicultural and democratic society with a strong interest in protecting dignity and diversity, promoting equality, and ensuring the vitality of a common belief in human rights."

That statement was quoted by the Ontario Divisional Court in its decision regarding a Christian university in British Columbia, in June.

Loyola High School, in Montreal, had challenged Quebec's curriculum whose stated objectives are "recognition of others" and "pursuit of the common good" by teaching the beliefs and practices of various world religions. In lower courts Loyola had argued that since it was teaching religion already, it should do so from a Catholic perspective. In the Supreme Court appeal the school changed its argument. They agreed to teach a course in world religions in a neutral tone; but when it came to Catholicism they still wanted the right to teach their perspective. ›

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CURRENT ISSUE, continued

The court accepted that argument. "Having found that Loyola's belief in its religious obligation to teach Catholicism and ethics from a Catholic perspective is consistent with its organizational purpose and operation, it is evident that [the education ministry's] denial of an exemption from the [curriculum]—which has the effect of requiring Loyola to teach its entire ethics and religion program from a neutral, secular perspective—infringes Loyola's freedom of religion in violation of [section 2a] of the Charter."

"There has been enough said in the court that reiterates what the Supreme Court panel decided," says Richard Moon, professor of law at the University of Windsor. "Parents have the right to send their kids to a private school, and the state has the obligation, responsibility and certainly the right to oversee what occurs in private schools. And to establish various curriculum requirements." Moon's research focuses on freedom of expression and freedom of conscience and religion.

The good portion of the court's decision was spent weighing the rights and obligations of the parties involved. "A secular state does not—and cannot—interfere with the beliefs or practices of a religious group unless they conflict with or harm overriding public interests. Nor can a secular state support or prefer the practices of one group over another. A secular state respects religious differences, it does not seek to extinguish them."

Moon adds: "So in the larger context, religious institutions, like churches, get to operate according to their own normal practices as long as it's accepted that membership in their community is essentially voluntary. The Presbyterian Church can hire and fire clergy on the basis of

accepting Presbyterianism, so exempted in that sense from human rights code on grounds of religion. But there's something different in an education environment where it's seen as a larger community interest."

The other case involves Trinity Western University's law school, which has applied to provincial law societies for automatic accreditation of their graduates so they can proceed with the process for licensing. Like many educational institutions, TWU also demands all students sign a code of conduct. TWU's Community Covenant includes promises not to engage in same-sex sexual activities.

The Law Society of Upper Canada denied TWU accreditation, arguing their covenant denied admission to members of the LGBT community.

The Divisional Court recognized that "harassment, shaming, ostracizing, contempt, humiliation, intimidation or insults are intolerable at TWU. Homophobic, disrespectful or discriminatory remarks or behaviour is strictly unacceptable." And that TWU met the requirements to provide a legal education.

However, the court went on to note: "On one side, there is the right of [TWU] to freedom of religion including their right to operate a law school designed for persons who share a common religious belief. On the other side, there are the rights of the members of the [law society], both current and future, to equal access, on a merit basis, to membership that [TWU], consistent with its history, has a duty to protect."

The court sided with the law society, noting, "The Community Covenant, by its own terms, constitutes a prejudicial treatment of different categories of people. It is, therefore, by its very nature, discriminatory." Trinity Western University's law graduates will not be granted automatic access to apply to the Law Society of Upper Canada for status within Ontario, as is available to graduates of other law schools across Canada. TWU graduates will be able to apply personally through the law society if they want to work in Ontario.

> 'It is one thing to say homosexuals or same-sex relationships are sinful or immoral. And another to say I can't be put in a position that shows that I support or affirm those relationships'

TWU won accreditation in Nova Scotia and lost in its home province of British Columbia. It will continue to seek recognition through the courts.

Moon points out there is an important distinction between "belief" and how that belief is acted out in society. "It is one thing to say homosexuals or same-sex relationships are sinful or immoral. And another to say I can't be put in a position that shows that I support or affirm those relationships. For example, I shouldn't have to provide flowers or rent a hall to a same-sex couple—even though the human rights code says I cannot discriminate on basis of sexual orientation."

That in a way is what the Christian Medical and Dental Society of Canada wants to challenge.

In a letter to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, CMDS argued: "Freedom of conscience is protected under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. ... It is not the CPSO's role to ensure access to abortions. Even if it were, there would be an onus on the CPSO to prove that it cannot ensure access to abortions without infringing on the Charter rights of individual physicians."

"The big issue before us now is physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia," Larry Worthen, executive director of CMDS told the *Record*. "We want to heal not harm. What we've learned of how this is implemented in other jurisdictions is that the safety of vulnerable people once this is legalized, is not assured. Apparently one in four physicians (in Canada) are open to participating in assisted suicide. Others do not want to participate."

CMDS may pursue a legal course in the future. If they do, the debate will begin again. As Prof. Moon explains, "The challenge for the courts is to find a way to fit this complex conception of religious commitment and its value (as a source of meaning, purpose and identity for the individual and group) into a constitutional framework that relies on a distinction between individual choices or commitments that should be protected as a matter of liberty, and individual attributes or traits that should be respected as a matter of equality. The constitutional framework (and perhaps more deeply, our conception of rights) imposes this distinction, between judgment and identity, on the rich and complex experience of religious commitment."

Andrew Faiz is the Record*'s senior editor. Amy MacLachlan is managing editor.*

MISSION

Visiting WICM

Celebrating Aboriginal ministries. By Robert Royal

While in Winnipeg, my daughter, son and I visited the recently opened Canadian Museum for Human Rights and in particular the exhibits on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Indian Residential Schools. Now that the TRC has come to a close, a challenge for us as citizens of both God's Kingdom and Canada, will be that our First Nations and Aboriginal peoples continue to be a priority of our mission and outreach mandates.

At St. Andrew's, Maple, Ont., we made a commitment a number of years ago to consistently give mission dollars to Winnipeg Inner City Missions, and while in Winnipeg I had the privilege of hand-delivering a cheque to executive director, Rev. Margaret Mullin. When I arrived on a Sunday afternoon, I was warmly received and given a guided tour of the Anishinabe Place of Hope facility by one of the volunteers. Spending time with Mullin was indeed an eye opener. She shared with me many joys and concerns of the mission. One major concern for her is that our First Nations and Aboriginal peoples will once again become the last and the lost. Many of these people are direct or indirect descendants of residential school survivors and possess many of the hurts and wounds of that system. Most noticeable at the mission was a banner which displays the names of many people who have died of both natural and unnatural causes—a death roll, if you will.

There are many justice issues that continue to weigh heavily on the hearts and spirits of this community, and the names on the banner are those of young and old, male and female, First Nations, Aboriginal, Métis. In light of this jarring reality, one of the obvious joys of the mission was the steady stream of volunteers who were providing a ride for those in the community who wished to attend worship. A number of those using the mission services cannot afford transportation, yet long to praise and worship God at the WICM community Sunday service.

While I met with Mullin, the phone kept ringing. These calls were from individuals and families in need of a ride to the 3:30 p.m. worship. Every effort was made to collect these folks and return them home later. When I first entered the sanctuary for worship, I met a lot of smiling faces; a celebration of people who were excited to express their faith in community. As I spoke with many of them, exchanging pleasantries, I became aware of the pain behind their eyes, which brought tears to mine. Their resiliency is palpable, as are their wounds.

My hope and prayer is that our Aboriginal brothers and sisters will continue to receive the essential pastoral and financial support they so richly deserve, aided by ongoing congregational mission and outreach commitments, from across our blessed land.

Rev. Robert Royal is minister at St. Andrew's, Maple, Ont.

PHOTO BY LAURIE WATT

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ABRIDGED VERSION

PWSDevelopments

The quarterly newsletter for Presbyterian World Service & Development • 2015 Edition, Issue 3

PHOTOS: PWS&D AND PAUL JEFFREY

water for life

TORRIUS SICHINGA'S LIFE HAS CHANGED IN THE LAST several months. Not long ago, Torrius often worried about the challenges her six children faced because of their lack of access to clean water and appropriate sanitation.

"My children used to get sick frequently. Because there was open defecation in my village there was also often a bad smell coming from those places," she shares.

But now, because of a PWS&D-supported project in Mwepa village in Malawi, Torrius' community has had their borehole rehabilitated—ensuring it will provide clean water today and into the future.

Clean Water is Essential for Life

In Canada, where clean water is generally easily accessible and abundant, it can be difficult to imagine that over 780 million people around the world do not have access to clean water, while 2.5 billion people lack adequate sanitation.

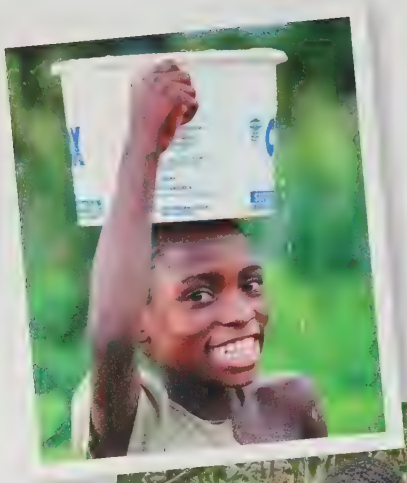
Diseases caused by dirty water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene are responsible for nearly two million deaths each year. In spite of this, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programs don't receive nearly as much attention as other global health issues.

As part of PWS&D's borehole rehabilitation process, sanitation and hygiene awareness campaigns are highlighting the necessity of proper sanitation facilities and showing people the links between poor sanitation and poor health.

After Torrius attended her first awareness session, she made a decision to change the way her family practices sanitation. She immediately decided that her family would construct a latrine and she wanted others in her community to learn from her good example.

Torrius' children are no longer getting sick from waterborne diseases. Teaching them to wash their hands after using the bathroom has made a huge difference. "I learned how diseases can be spread and how important it is to wash hands," she shares. "I will never allow that cycle of disease transmission to affect my family again." ▶

In the first year, the project has rehabilitated five boreholes—allowing more than 1,200 people to access safe drinking water.



FAST FACTS ABOUT WATER AND SANITATION

- 750 million people lack access to clean water—that's about 1 in 9 people
- Diarrhea caused by poor drinking water and sanitation kills over 840,000 people a year
- More people in the world have a cell phone than have a toilet
- 1 in 3 people lacks access to improved sanitation
- Women and children spend 140 million hours each day collecting water
- Reductions in time spent collecting water increase school attendance

Helping Water Flow in Malawi

Edna Nampelo remembers what it was like when the well in her small village in Malawi broke down for over a month.

She and other members of her community tried to determine the source of the problem by taking the well apart, which only caused further damage.

Eventually they hired a mechanic, but even he was unable to generate the clean, drinkable water they needed.

Edna felt helpless. "Since well maintenance was regarded as a male task, all we could do was cook for the men repairing the well," she shares.

Like Torrius, Edna had no other choice but to collect water from unprotected sources. She traveled great distances to fill only a single bucket. Her family also became sick from the contaminated water.

In countries like Malawi, all it takes is one cracked water pipe to leave an entire village facing months of water shortages and waterborne disease.

PWS&D is in the first year of the water, sanitation and hygiene project in Mpata, Malawi. In collaboration with local partners, the project helps communities learn how to improve sanitation and hygiene, and maintain new water sources for the long-term. The project was implemented in Edna's village where she received training in well construction, maintenance and repair.

Edna now knows the mechanics of the well and can easily make the necessary repairs when water does not flow.

With practiced hands, she skilfully assembles a water pipe that is then used to extract water from the ground. "I call myself a mechanic because I can detect a problem and solve it," Edna says proudly.

Edna is empowered to help her community stay healthy and experience life in its fullest abundance. "This will help us fix the problem in a short time, to have safe drinking water all the time," she shares with a smile. "I would like to extend my gratitude to those assisting our village."

In developing countries like Malawi, clean water has the power to transform communities. And, like the ripples that glide across its surface, the implications of clean water are far-reaching—expanding to touch many aspects of daily life.

When talking about the clean water shortage in Malawi, the need to build more wells or latrines is obvious. Less obvious is the importance of teaching sanitation, hygiene, and well maintenance.

Clean water not only quenches thirst, it also helps improve irrigation systems for food production and allows men and women to harvest crops, care for their families, send their children to school, expand their livelihoods and live healthy, productive lives.

Supporting and enabling people to take control of their health and well-being is contributing to sustainable, long-term development and lasting change. More and more, PWS&D is empowering people like Torrius and Edna to sustain the flow of life-giving water to ensure hope, happiness, health and vitality for all. ■

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PWS&D continues to respond to disasters—both human-caused and natural—around the world. To support our ongoing response to disasters in Nepal, Syria and Guatemala, visit WeRespond.ca/donate.

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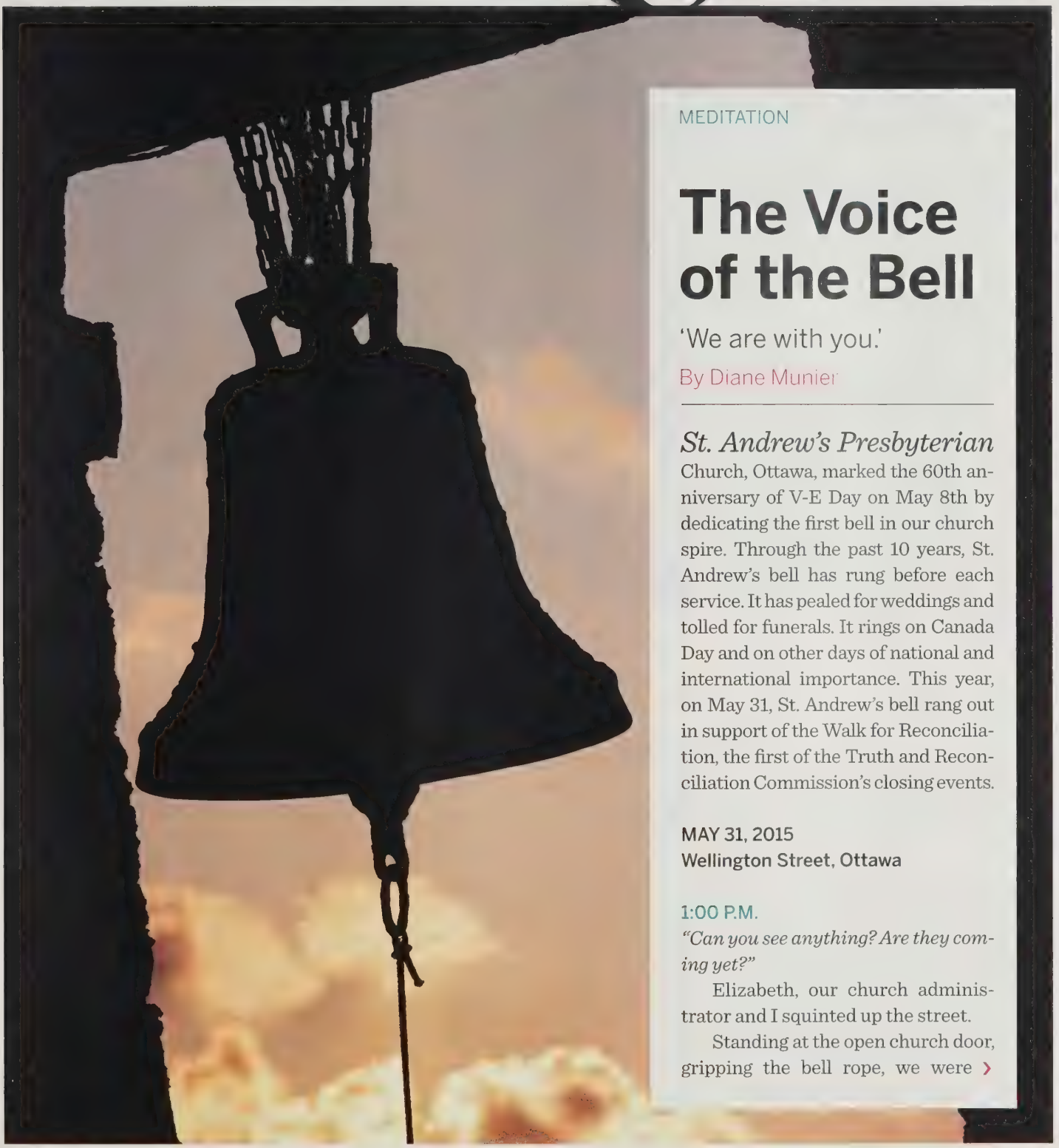
Focus

Stories of mission, ministry and community



ISTOCK

MEDITATION

The Voice of the Bell

'We are with you.'

By Diane Munier

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Ottawa, marked the 60th anniversary of V-E Day on May 8th by dedicating the first bell in our church spire. Through the past 10 years, St. Andrew's bell has rung before each service. It has pealed for weddings and tolled for funerals. It rings on Canada Day and on other days of national and international importance. This year, on May 31, St. Andrew's bell rang out in support of the Walk for Reconciliation, the first of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's closing events.

MAY 31, 2015
Wellington Street, Ottawa

1:00 P.M.

"Can you see anything? Are they coming yet?"

Elizabeth, our church administrator and I squinted up the street.

Standing at the open church door, gripping the bell rope, we were ›

MEDITATION, continued

ready to ring our bell and cheer the Truth and Reconciliation marchers on their way.

Where were they?

Thousands strong, gathered in a huge demonstration to move forward together from their painful past, the marchers were due to parade right in front of our church. They were walking the four-and-a-half kilometres from Gatineau to Ottawa City Hall, and we were set to ring our bell, letting them hear loudly and clearly that we supported them.

1:05 P.M.

A cyclist raced up and shouted: *"You won't believe it! Thousands are marching and they'll be here in 15 minutes!"*

He dashed back to look again.

1:10 P.M.

"Can you hear anything?
Are those drums?"

No, not yet.

A motorcycle policeman swerved up in front.

"You folks aren't letting out now, are you? That might be tricky."

"No, no—we're going to ring our church bell, we're letting the marchers know we're with them."

"You are? That's great!" He beamed at us, and roared off.

"Diane, go and look again—as soon as they pass the archives, we'll start pulling!"

1:15 P.M.

"Wait...wait...I hear something...
I hear the drums!"

Now we see them. At last!

"Here they come! Here they come!"

And with three great, strong pulls, our bell sang out, echoing down the street, pulling the marchers towards us.

"They're here! They're here!"

The drums were leading the way, the bells pealing and pulling and the drums thumping the counterpoint.

They were right in front now, a great river of people; row upon row upon row upon row of marchers.

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, with hundreds of residential school survivors, families, supporters, friends, all walking shoulder to shoulder.

Haida, Nootka, Dene, Cree, Métis, Anishinabe, Six Nations, Inuit, Innu, Mi'kmaq. Dozens of tribes and groups marching side by side. Little children, young people, mothers and fathers, grandparents—all marching together. People in wheelchairs, people in walkers, people with banners and flags and photos and eagle feathers. People in glorious native dress, people in jeans—and so many in red T-shirts with "I am a Residential School Survivor" on the front.

"We're ringing the bell
for you, brothers and sisters!
We're ringing our bell for you!
For you, for you, for you!"

Peter, our custodian, stood high on the steps and waved and shouted over and over and over:

"For you, brothers, for you—
we're ringing our bell for you!"

The marchers stared, waved and shouted back:

"Thank you, thank you! Thank you!"

A few 'broke rank' and ran up the church steps, clasping our hands, hugging us, thanking us.

"This means so much to us—
thank you for ringing!"

"Here." A woman wearing a red survivor T-shirt handed me a small pouch of tobacco. *"Thank you so much for doing this. I want you to have this."*

A woman in Haida native dress came up the steps and hugged Elizabeth tightly. *"You inspire us!"*

"We are so proud of you, all of you," Elizabeth waved and shouted.

Two young aboriginal men bounded up the steps with their cameras:

"We must record this! This means so much to us! Keep pulling!"

A man with a child on his shoulder blew us a kiss: *"Thank you for ringing!"*

A chief, his eagle feather headdress brushing the ground, turned and saluted us.

The bell pealed and pealed and the drums pounded and thumped, and still the people came. And came. And came.

An elderly Inuit woman, supported by two younger women—her daughters, perhaps—slowly mounted our steps.

"I am a survivor," she said, looking at me steadily. *"May I ring the bell with you?"* Wordlessly, I handed her the bell rope and let her ring it by herself.

She pulled seven, eight times, then handed the rope back.

"That was wonderful." She smiled. Surely a blessing for me.

"Thank you for doing this for us."

1:45 P.M.

We had been ringing non-stop for half an hour.

Gradually, the crowds thinned and the marchers disappeared up Wellington Street, past Parliament Hill and out of sight.

Now, our bell was silent.

Peter stood exhausted and hoarse.

Elizabeth was weeping.

I was too full to speak.

What had happened here?

These marchers were thanking us?

Grateful to us?

We who had been part of an appalling colonial history of neglect and abuse—they were thanking us?

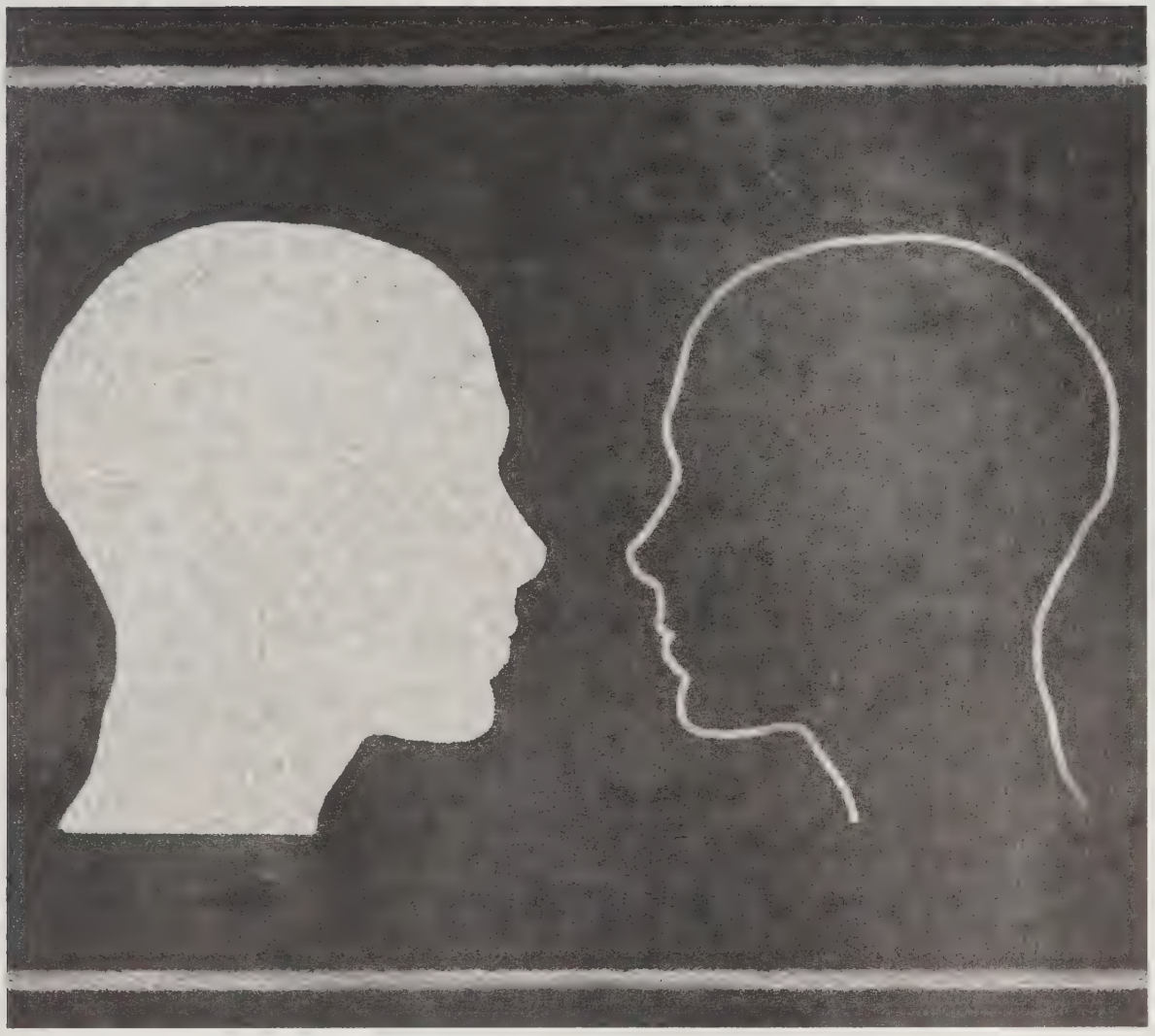
What, then, had our bell said to the marchers?

You are marching to hope.

You are marching to a new beginning.

And we are with you.

Diane Munier is a writer in Ottawa.



ISTOCK

VIEWPOINT

Culture Clash

Sharing the gospel while respecting differences. By Jay Bailey

As a lay missionary working with Anishinabe people on Manitoba's Kees-eekowenin and Rolling River reserves in the 1970s, I, like other missionaries at the time, was given lessons in how to learn any language and cross-cultural communications. This was preparation for sharing the gospel in a way that was sensitive to the Holy Spirit working within the cultural context of the people.

When I arrived, I found that people over the age of 40 were very comfortable in their own language and less so in English; 20- to 40-year-olds were ashamed to speak their language, with adequate English; and those under 20 knew little of their own language while conversant in everyday accented English. I started to learn Anishinabe from an elder and, after a couple of years, lessons started for the young on the ›

VIEWPOINT, continued

reserve. In my preparations, there may have been a passing reference to residential schools, but the full story was not yet known. I met some wonderful, faith-filled people whom I still treasure in my heart, and I still pray for those who exhibited self-destructive behaviours, all-too-often rooted in shame.

Forty-two years after leaving the reserves, I felt blessed to hear Rev. Mark MacDonald give a talk on truth and reconciliation at Knox College, Toronto, where he, as national indigenous bishop for the Anglican Church of Canada, received an honorary doctorate in May. He started by mentioning that we should always start meetings by reading the gospel. For one thing, it shortens the meeting.

His readings were not chosen in advance, but serendipitous: Matthew 18:20 and John 16:12-20. A few of those present commented on the new word they received from verse 12: "I have much more to say to you, but right now it would be more than you could understand." I reflected on how Europeans arrived on these shores with the papal blessing from the 1500s, that any new peoples who did not know the gospel were deemed heathen, and their personal safety, land and even their lives were forfeit to Christian civilization. I have felt for some time now that God brought us to these shores not only to share the gospel, but also to learn new perspective on the gospel from outside our own culture. The first goal got twisted by a colonial government into a goal of cultural annihilation. And we utterly failed at the second.

And so, the schools: "Until we understand the depth of betrayal ... in baptizing these children, making them our own and then visiting horrors upon them, we won't have a spiritual understanding of what we have done," MacDonald said. There were 185,000 students involved. Among the 80,000 still living, there are 50,000 claims of physical and sexual abuse.

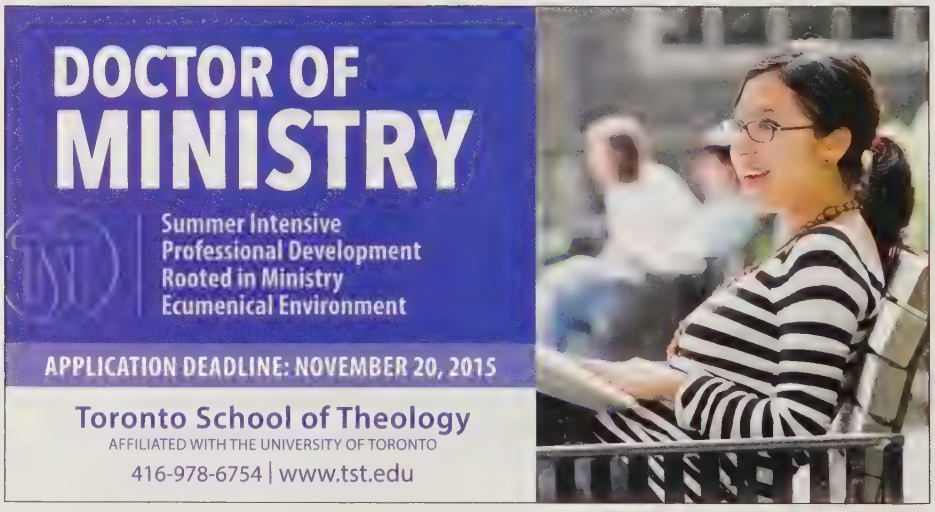
We need to understand systemic evil. Societies construct mindsets that can be evil: ideas, ideologies, institutions that can be equated with some biblical principalities and powers.

"Indifferent ... is sometimes what we look like when we're ashamed. It's how some of us hide our shame," said MacDonald. We feel the need to act, but don't know what to do. What is God calling us to do? Our Western missiology used to be more about idolatry, idolizing our culture. Now the emphasis is more upon faith.

MacDonald asks, "How will God prepare us to hear and understand?" We need to be open to the leading of the Spirit. Extraordinary things happen when God puts ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances. Keep in touch with what's happening. Idle No More (an indigenous resistance movement in Canada) has shown that you can be indigenous and modern. That was a shock to some people, not only that there are modern indigenous peoples, but that they are still critical of some aspects of our culture.

MacDonald also touched on the future of the church, where denominations are shrinking. Here we can learn from missions to First Nations. He states that we need to open ourselves to learning to be the church where having a building is a liability. How might the gospel look as it spreads without buildings? He asks, "Can we be the Church without a church?" (To look for an example within the PCC, we have only to look to the Cariboo ministry in B.C. Perhaps we will be using this model on a wider basis in the future.)

Jay Bailey is the first male graduate of Ewart College, a former lay missionary in Manitoba, a retired French teacher and a voyageur, based in Simcoe, Ont.



A LONG ROAD

Reconciliation is a journey for all of us. By Elizabeth Keith

The sound of the drums and the songs rang out as 10,000 people turned the corner to Ottawa City Hall. This Walk for Reconciliation marked the beginning of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's closing events. Emotions rose as banners waved, held by residential school survivors and non-Indigenous people who walked together, side by side.

It was hard not to get emotional.

The next four days were filled with words, tears and hope.

Vivian Ketchum was one of the people there. From the age of five, she attended Cecilia Jeffrey, a Presbyterian-run residential school in Kenora, Ont. It was the same school her siblings and her father attended. Her mother went to St. Mary's, a Catholic-run residential school in the same community.

She tells the story of her sister, who died of liver sclerosis, and of her other siblings who all died before the age of 50. "They couldn't live with their memories," Vivian said. She recalls how her sister couldn't sleep at night, so haunted by her experiences that she turned to alcohol to numb the pain.

Many residential school survivors said they probably will not live to see reconciliation. Even Justice Murray Sinclair, chair of the TRC, said he doesn't believe it will happen in his lifetime

When talking to Vivian she showed me her hand; one of her fingers was bent. She was hit by one of the workers at the school when she was five. Her finger was broken and it never healed.

"A large part of me has [been able to forgive], but I'm finding out today, that there's still some anger left. When there were some pictures showing on the big screen, the black and white photos of the students and that, I had to walk out," she said. "I realized there is still some anger in there that is really deep and I don't think that will ever go away."

Vivian is involved in the Presbyterian Church in Canada, especially through Winnipeg Inner City Missions, which provides many types of support for aboriginal people and is home to Place of Hope Presbyterian Church. She has been an active part of the denomination's work toward healing and reconciliation. "I'm here to teach, I'm not here to hurt," she said.

Reconciliation involves walking a long, difficult and winding road.

PHOTO BY TED SIMARD

Many residential school survivors said they probably will not live to see reconciliation. Even Justice Murray Sinclair, chair of the TRC, said he doesn't believe it will happen in his lifetime.

There were 94 recommendations made in the TRC's report, which was presented during the closing event in Ottawa. Now it is a question of whether the governments, the churches, and we as Canadians will implement them.

Former Prime Minister Joe Clark spoke as an honorary witness at the event. He said there is a difference between an apology and a priority. We have apologized. Now we must take the next step and make reconciliation our priority as Canadians.

It is our responsibility to learn, to talk about reconciliation in our schools, churches and governments. Building up relationships should be a priority not just for our leaders, but for ourselves.

On the last day of the closing events, the morning was filled by "Healing with Humour and Music." For about two hours, survivors shared songs, stories and dances. The goal was to use these tools of expression to reconcile on a personal level. It was moving to see victims of cultural genocide smiling and sharing their heritage. It filled me with hope to see them dance.

After each person shared, we said these simple words to them: "Thank you. I'm sorry. I love you."

These words brought tears to many. It is a simple form of reconciliation. To thank each other for both sharing and listening, to acknowledge that what we have done was wrong, and to promise to walk together as neighbours towards reconciliation. The final TRC event was but the first step.

Elizabeth Keith is studying journalism at Carleton University, Ottawa.

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Truth and Reconciliation

/ Stephen Kendall and Ted

Private Pain on Public Display

A TRC event seen through the eyes of a residential school survivor. By Vivian Ketchum

I arrived at Carleton University, Ottawa, to register for the Truth and Reconciliation event. The clerk at the front desk couldn't find my registration. I had to wait. I went back to sit on a bench across the room. The theme of the event during that week was about residential schools and it was making me uneasy. I had attended the Cecilia Jeffrey residential school in Kenora, Ont., as a young child. It was managed by the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

As I sat there watching people coming in to register, I began to feel myself being pulled into my past. I felt like I was back at the residential school being dropped off as a young child. A strange place. Strange people. Strange language. I started shaking. I couldn't hold myself together. I began crying and wrapped my arms around myself. No one came to help me. I was alone with my nightmares of the past. I had the phone number of the residential school crisis line and phoned them. The nice lady over the phone helped to ground me, to bring me back to the present.

A few minutes later, the organizer of our group arrived. She came to where I was sitting. I could hear her, but couldn't quite focus on her face. I told her to keep talking to me, please keep talking to me. When I was more settled, she sorted out the registration problem and got me to my room to rest.

I travelled to Ottawa as a guest of the Presbyterian Church for the closing ceremonies of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in early June. After eight years and seven large events across the country, the TRC was going to present its findings. There were many scheduled parades and ceremonies and other activities planned for the historic event.

It was an emotional week for me. I felt like I travelled back to my past for hopes of a better future.

The week before I went to Ottawa, I returned home to Kenora to have a chat with my ancestors in my home community. I went to the two memorial sites in Kenora where there were once two residential schools. One was run by the Presbyterian Church and the other by the Catholic Church. At the two memorial sites, I gathered soil and moss in two cloth bags. For me it represented the tears of my ancestors. I was going to carry the bags with me during the TRC event.

Then I went to find Nancy Morrison, a respected elder in my Aboriginal community. Nancy also went to a residential school as a child. She was also a childhood friend of my mother's. Both she and my mom attended St. Mary's Indian School. She gave me a hug and shared kind words and much needed support for my trip.

I think of myself as mentally healthy, but the event opened old wounds and new memories surfaced. The trip required strength and support from the friends I was travelling with. There were uplifting moments, and healing moments for me.

During the first day, there were aboriginal drummers and smudging. That smell of the burning herbs was comforting for me. I also had a handful of sage that was given to me by Rev. Margaret Mullin of Winnipeg Inner City Missions before my trip to help me cope with any anxieties.

About 10,000 people participated in the Reconciliation Walk through Ottawa on Sunday. The residential school survivors were wearing red shirts. There were indigenous women wearing traditional ribbon skirts. I saw men wearing headdresses and ribbon shirts. All manners of traditional dress. Aboriginal women wearing their hair in braids or letting it flow freely down their back. Men wearing their hair in braids. They wore proudly what was once taken away from them.

There were also church people, wearing their white collars and crosses. Some even walking hand in hand with residential school survivors. When the Reconciliation Walk proceeded past a church, the bells rang. It was an amazing sight to witness all this. I could hear the bells of the church ringing and a few people were pounding on hand drums as they walked in a large crowd.

A "blanket exercise" was conducted on Parliament Hill on Monday as part of the Learning Day, and was attended by nearly 100 people. Halfway through the exercise, the facilitator asked a jingle dancer to come out from the sidelines of the crowd. Aboriginal drummers did an honour song for all the residential school children who never came home. The jingle dancer danced not for the crowds that were there, but for the lost children. A healing moment.

Some of the closing events were held in scary churches. I say scary because they used to scare me as a child. One church was a vast space inside with colourful windows and wooden pews. The same musty smell. At the end of one church service, an indigenous drum group came down the aisle. As the beat of the drum echoed in the vast space of the church building, the little child in me awoke. I like to refer to my lost childhood as "the little child." I sat there in the wooden pew and allowed my tears to flow. This was a powerfully healing moment for me. Afterwards I went up to thank the drummers. I told them I thought I would never live to hear the drum inside a church.

When the TRC commissioners released their findings and responses, there were tears shed by many of the residential school survivors in attendance because the words spoken triggered old memories. The pictures of residential school children and their schools were being broadcast on a large screen. It was an overwhelming moment.

Still I am left wondering if all that was promised on that day will be delivered. I come from a past of broken promises

Justice Murray Sinclair, one of the three commissioners, said, "We will act!" That was a strong statement. All of the events held during the week offered hope and healing for a better future for the indigenous community.

Still I am left wondering if all that was promised on that day will be delivered. I come from a past of broken promises. As a child, hoping my mom and dad will come back to pick me up. In a foster home, being told I will never have to move again. As a parent, we won't take your child.

The TRC event provided healing moments. That's what I will take with me. I am stronger for facing old memories, and for making new ones. The question now being asked is, what comes next? After the TRC moves away from front page news, what is the next step to moving towards reconciliation?

As one speaker said during the release of the report, this is a Canadian problem, not an Aboriginal problem. You have our stories, you saw our tears—both of which played out in the media. Private pain was on public display. As a residential school survivor, I would like to say, we have done our part.

Vivian Ketchum lives in Winnipeg.

Presbyterians at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's closing event in Ottawa.

Rev. Stephen Kendall, the PCC's principal clerk, with a child planting a homemade heart in the "heart garden" at Rideau Hall.

Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris (centre), Moderator of the 2014 General Assembly, with Rev. Gary Paterson, then-United Church Moderator, and Fr. Peter Bisson, provincial superior of the Jesuits in English Canada.

Vivian Ketchum with Clara Hughes, Canadian olympian and honorary witness at the TRC's closing event.

The Challenge of Reconciliation

It's much easier said than done. By Laura Heming

Reconciliation isn't easy, even when the truth is known.

The Bass River Pastoral Charge in Kent County, N.B., has been in a gradual reconciliation process with their native neighbours since well before the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations.

The BRPC consists of four rural Presbyterian churches spread throughout the northern outskirts of Moncton, at the four corners of Kent County, right below the Bass River. They're a maximum of 30 minutes from each other down the back roads. Each can be dated back to the Loyalist period.

For the past eight years, Rev. Sandy Sutherland has been the core minister for each congregation, with each church receiving around a quarter of his time. Until recently, Sutherland was the only ordained minister in the region, involving himself thoroughly in the ministries of each church, as well as turning his attention to the neighbouring communities.

Further up the river is Elsipogtog, a First Nations community stretching 20 km, made up of a Mi'kmaq First Nations band of around 3,000 people. This community has long wrestled with injustices, even by their own New Brunswick government. They have most recently been present in the media for their 2013 protest against shale gas exploration.

The body of Presbyterian congregations has been striving to heal the broken relations between their faith communities and the neighbouring Elsipogtog native community among numerous other ministry programs.

This initiative is nothing new, however. Sutherland's wife Marly, who grew up in the area, has long seen the potential for church relations with the Elsipogtog people. Following her vision, Sutherland has since tried to lead his churches into conversations about how they can intertwine with this reserve that is right at their doorstep.

"Coming into this position there was a feeling—we're so close, so how could we not do anything? These have always been tiny steps—watchdogging where to minister, or even allowing people from the reserve to acknowledge my willingness to talk if they desire a conversation with someone religious," says Sutherland.

As a church core that recognizes the existence of clear next steps as well as foggier ones in ministry, the Bass River Pastoral Charge is finding themselves in a learning curve in their attempts at reconciliation—as there seems to be no real bridges of trust to officially cross boundaries.

Their strongest bridge is currently through their youth, who interact with the Elsipogtog youth at the high school.

Sutherland believes that other than their young people, there is no real initiative to build bridges currently. The churches do not want to make a specific call to their neighbours unless they are asked. Part of this is because of the apparent mistrust present on both sides of the relationship.

"When the church reaches out it looks like charity, and when the reserve reaches out, it is perceived as wanting another handout," says Sutherland.

Amidst this mutual tension, the Bass River Pastoral Charge is currently working on light community outreach, trying to stretch out of their comfort zone of reaching out to communities who are typically easier to reach. This includes acts such as sending out flyers for events to communities outside the churches, including the reserve. Sutherland frequently makes himself available for any pastoral care and counselling for grieving families that may be needed, as well as assisting with youth programs.

He continues reaching out by allowing himself to be present in the lives of the Elsipogtog as frequently as they wish him to be, which has led him to occasionally participate in traditional practices such as smudging—actions he sees as the small steps that will lead to gradual reconciliation.

Sutherland believes another aspect of a healthy approach may be in the process of becoming good neighbours to the Elsipogtog people, until they can gradually become friends. He acknowledges the time that healing can take, especially when dealing with a situation with thick roots.

"Generations of mistrust are not healed overnight, or

through one event. These people do not want to be treated as a publicity stunt like many politicians. So, those of us who have the heart to work and live together with our First Nations neighbours must do so humbly, to build up a generation of trust and draw us together in peace," says Sutherland.

The humility of the church institution as a whole is a key concept highlighted in the recent recommendations put forward by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. This apology process includes implementing the recommendations and educating church members on the realities of reconciliation, in all its complexities.

The recommendations have called upon church leaders, in association with indigenous spiritual leaders, to cultivate and educate all people who work in Aboriginal communities, specifically on the need to respect indigenous spirituality. Churches now have the responsibility to alleviate such conflicts and prevent spiritual violence. (You can download the TRC documents, including the recommendations, at trc.ca).

In response to the recommendations, Sutherland finds himself cultivating the ideas of humility and loosening the tight grasp of control that the church has often believed is the way to mend.

"It's not a bad idea not to be forceful. The First Nations people don't want to be coddled. We don't want to overstep our boundaries as the church. We need to recognize that mistakes were made and must be willing to have individuals admit that what was being done in our missions was actually hurting," says Sutherland.

Rev. Peter Bush, minister of Westwood, Winnipeg, has also recognized the essentiality of the recommendations. He urged churches to take them on at General Assembly in June. One of the key aspects Bush believes is vital in the process of reconciling is repentance.

"Apology does a number of things. It reminds the church of our past and our commitment to live differently. Each Sunday we repent for the sins we commit ourselves, but we need to start practicing that corporately," says Bush.

He believes there are a few aspects that come into opposition with the required humility.

"It is difficult because of human pride. It is not about forgive and forget. The non-First Nations church has to go in and listen, and listen carefully, preparing to have people test if we are serious. Part of this test is how well we know the history of it, and how serious we really are," he says.

As the Bass River churches are experiencing, reconciliation is nothing short of a long and dynamic process. Bush believes that even getting to a point of doing anything tangible is secondary in the process.

> 'It's not a bad idea not to be forceful. The First Nations people don't want to be coddled. We don't want to overstep our boundaries as the church'

"Only quietly, carefully and gently—out of listening for a period of time—can we do anything."

Rev. Stewart Folster, head of the Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry and the inspiration for Sutherland's reconciliation work, is not convinced that genuine reconciliation can happen until First Nations people experience healing, which he is not sure will happen in this lifetime.

"I have relatives who have lived through the generational effects of the residential school era. They have been sexually abused, homeless and addicted to alcohol and drugs—all which have led some to brain damage. They will never completely heal and never be functional enough to hold a job or get an education. How do you make amends with someone who has been through all of that?"

Amidst this disastrous reality, native peoples need the continued prayers of the church.

"In spite of all that has happened, the people still say to me that they need prayer and God in their lives. They desire to have native churches to call their own," Folster said.

He believes that supporting existing missions is the most effective way to see change.

"My advice would be that the church should support the native missions in Canada in a more substantial way than what is happening now. The healing needs to continue and the native missions are the ones who can really offer the healing," says Folster.

Healing is the core concept in the eyes of the First ›

Nations people as well, according to Rev. Margaret Mullin. She's executive director of Winnipeg Inner City Missions, an operation committed to serving aboriginal individuals and families in the inner city, and minister at Place of Hope, a church made up primarily of aboriginal people.

"The First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people we serve are cautiously optimistic since the release of the TRC recommendations—finally we have been heard. They are also skeptical that this will make any difference in the long run, hoping it doesn't end up on the shelf somewhere. They desire the developing of respectful relations with non-Aboriginal people, racial and economic divides addressed. They desire a change in the child welfare, health, and justice systems to better reflect First Nations needs, providing equal opportunities for their children and youth to grow up into abundant life. They need the PCC to focus more attention on the healing needs of the people it serves," says Mullin.

Vivian Ketchum, a Kenora residential school survivor, echoes this desire to be genuinely sought out and listened to by the church.

"Walk with us—beside us, not behind us, not in front of us. Accept our differences—honour our grieving past, hear us and listen to us," she says.

Perhaps upon heeding these criticisms, churches may be in better shape to think about reconciliation in a more maintainable and realistic way—quick to listen, slow to speak. We are as much in need of reconciliation.

As for the Bass River churches, they will continue to work their way towards reconciliation with their Elsipogtog neighbours—through humility, patience, and the restoration that only time, trial and silence can create.

Laura Heming was the Record*'s summer intern. She lives in Hamilton, Ont.*

Children sitting on the human rights monument in Ottawa.

FROM THE MODERATOR

Slaves to Survival

Are we honouring Christ? By Karen Horst

Being Moderator provides the opportunity to witness the work of the Holy Spirit in our midst. One of my priorities this year is to visit and celebrate a variety of churches and missions that have taken the risk to carve out a different future for themselves. We hear so much about church decline and we cannot stick our heads in the sand pretending such statistics do not exist. But there are many congregations large and small that are listening to the Spirit and are bravely going forward to do God's calling in a new way. They have tried new ministries, additional staff, reconstructed worship services, amalgamations and even closures to ensure that Christ's ministry lives on.

The danger in any collective institution is that it can become an end in itself. Churches are no different. We become too focused on the survival of what we have known and cherished. Instead we need to use our specific and unique gifts to minister to the hurts and hopes of others. By doing so we will honour Christ, grow spiritually and often grow numerically as well.

Too often we want all the guarantees of success before we take the first step, but that's not how God works. Jesus called his disciples to take a leap of faith, leaving their secure livelihood of fishing to work for the gospel in a very different way. They had no idea how it would all turn out. Too often we say, "We can't afford it," when in actual fact we can't afford not to.

I have repeatedly watched congregations come alive and grow financially and spiritually as they have risked taking a leap. In one congregation, we decided to raise the funds to provide eight cows for a village in Guatemala after all the appropriate partnership conversations. We set out to do a major educational piece and we set the goal to raise the funds in six months. Well, the money poured in in a couple of weeks. We hadn't even started our educational program yet! God taught us then to be much braver and in the end a school was built for 500 children. We got so wrapped up in learning about Guatemala and proper development principles and being playful in fundraising, we didn't even realize that a number of people had started to attend because we were a church that was "looking out for others not ourselves." Of course, more than a few said we shouldn't do this. The church was struggling financially. People will "rob Peter to pay Paul" but none of that was true. In fact, financially it was one of our best years all around. Generosity breeds generosity. Money follows mission. People participate and give generously when they see the meaningful purpose to which it is directed.

We become too focused on the survival of what we have known and cherished. Instead we need to use our specific and unique gifts to minister to the hurts and hopes of others

Over and over again, I have experienced growth, excitement, plenty of funds and a new vitality in church life when the congregation starts focusing on the needs of others that they can uniquely and capably address. Whether it's a ministry with alcoholics or neighbourhood children or those who are grieving or struggling seniors (the list goes on and on), our calling is not to keep our buildings open but rather to give ourselves away for others. Ironically, as we do, people join us in our cause and they naturally help with our church life. If we hear Christ's call to reach out and minister in his name, then the rest is also in God's hands. Whether we are to survive or not is not the fundamental question. Whether we are honouring the call of Christ is. Let's risk doing a fresh new ministry, and, to borrow the title of a great book, *Oh, the Places You'll Go!*

Rev. Karen Horst is minister at St. Andrew's, Orillia, Ont.

WESLEY BATES/3INABOX

People & Places

Find more online at presbyterianrecord.ca

CARIBOO BETHEL CHURCH, WILLIAMS LAKE, B.C.

Together, the four Steward brothers (Seth and Jacob on the left and Isaac and Jesse on the right) and their friend Lyndon Froese (centre) are Wittenberg, a contemporary Christian band from Williams Lake. On June 23 they performed a "Concert with a Cause" that raised over $2,000 for Presbyterian World Service & Development's clean well water projects in Kenya and Malawi. The Steward brothers and their families attend the Springhouse-Williams Lake House Church which is affiliated with the Presbyterian Cariboo House Church Ministry.

ARMOUR HEIGHTS, TORONTO

Rev. Bill Middleton has been a fixture in the life and work of Armour Heights. He was called by the congregation in 1978 and served faithfully until his well-deserved retirement in July. He provided leadership during a successful amalgamation, helped establish a health ministry program and a parish nurse position, and offered wise and familiar words during his last service as minister: "We are the church together."

ST. ANDREW'S, ARNPRIOR, ONT.

On March 28, the congregation honoured Helen Black for her 30 years of service as office administrator and treasurer (and as if that wasn't enough, she was the choir director and organist, too). Here Black poses with Rev. David Hooper, the current minister, and former ministers Rev. Leo Hughes and Rev. Milton Fraser.

THE OTHER SIX DAYS

That 'Presbyterian' Thing

Tobacco, bourbon and some stuff to do before you die. By Bradley Childs

THE PRESBYTERIAN SMOKE

If you are like me, every once in a while you delve back into the unsavoury world of smoking. No, I'm not talking about those little rolled pieces of paper filled with the Virginia ditch weed the growers sweep off the floor once all the top buyers have had their pick. And no, I am certainly not talking about those new electronic vapour things. I mean real honest, sweet, smooth, latikia blended, single-farm-only pipe tobacco. I would never advise any non-smoker to take up a torch and run, but if you happen to be a regular or, like me, a once-a-year dabbler then I may have something for you. As Martin Luther famously wrote, if you are going to sin, "sin boldly." So if you're going to smoke, why not smoke Presbyterian brand pipe tobacco?

FIND IT @ Search smokingpipes.com for "Presbyterian."

THE PRESBYTERIAN DRINK

Many years ago, Scottish immigrants left their homeland filled with Scotch whisky and honey. And over the years, many of those Scots found their way into Virginia and Kentucky. There the locals had their own distinctive type of whiskey called bourbon. Local Scots became famous for a simple drink mixture. Over the years many different variations have come and gone, and certain areas add subtle differences of course, but there remains at its purist form a humble little drink called, "The Presbyterian" (or alternatively the "Bourbon Pres"). You can try Martha Stewart's version, if you like. Or you can stick to the basics: equal parts bourbon, ginger ale and soda water.

FIND IT @ Search liquor.com for "Presbyterian."

Stuff Presbyterian Seminarians Say (from YouTube.com).

THE PRESBYTERIAN BUCKET LIST

Everyone needs one of those lists of things you want to do before you die. Don't have one? Well, lucky for you the good folks at reyes-chow.com have compiled just such a list. They published "12 Things Presbyterians Should do Before They Die" and I must say, I found myself agreeing with them. Number 6 is, "Next visit hell... That is, go to a presbytery meeting." I'll let you read the rest of these little gems for yourself.

FIND IT @ Find it at reyes-chow.com/2013/07/top-12-things-presbyterians-should-do-before-they-die

A PRESBYTERIAN VIDEO

Now I suspect there are only a select few that this particular video might speak to but I'm going to list it anyway. "Stuff Presbyterian Seminarians Say" is perhaps better titled "Stuff Presbyterian Seminary Students Say if They Are Under 35 and Graduated Within the Last 10 Years," but still... it really "speaks into my heart" and I for one "want to just echo" its sentiment. I can't tell you how often I've found myself praying the words, "God of non-gender specific pronouns, please [fill in the blank]."

FIND IT @ YouTube.com. Search for "Stuff Presbyterian Seminarians Say."

Rev. Bradley Childs is minister at First, Regina.

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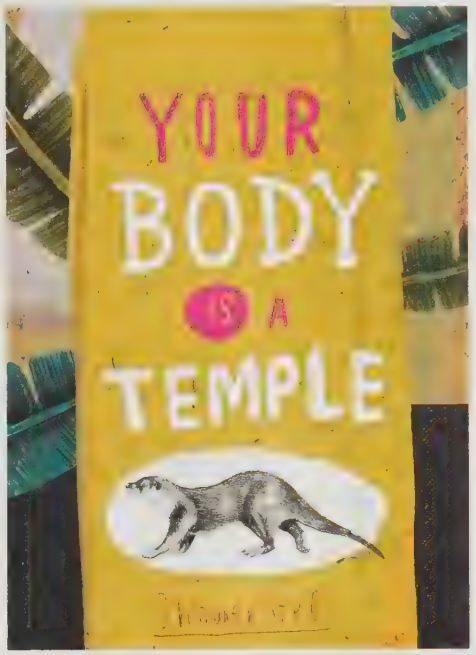
FOR THE JOURNEY

Otters on the Dock

Our bodies as worship. By David Webber



"Shhhhh. Don't wake up Addy, but come and see. The Otter People are on our dock."

Linda sat up in bed and stuck both fists in her eyes before she stealthily slipped out of bed trying hard not to wake up Addy the Labrador.

We both tiptoed out into the living room and sleepily gazed down the slope to our dock on Lac La Hache. Linda got out the binoculars and I made breakfast watching the show from the kitchen window. Eventually we both pulled up a couple of antique rockers to the living room picture window to share breakfast and the binoculars. Addy had now joined us for toast corners and was doing her best not to bark under threatening glares from Linda.

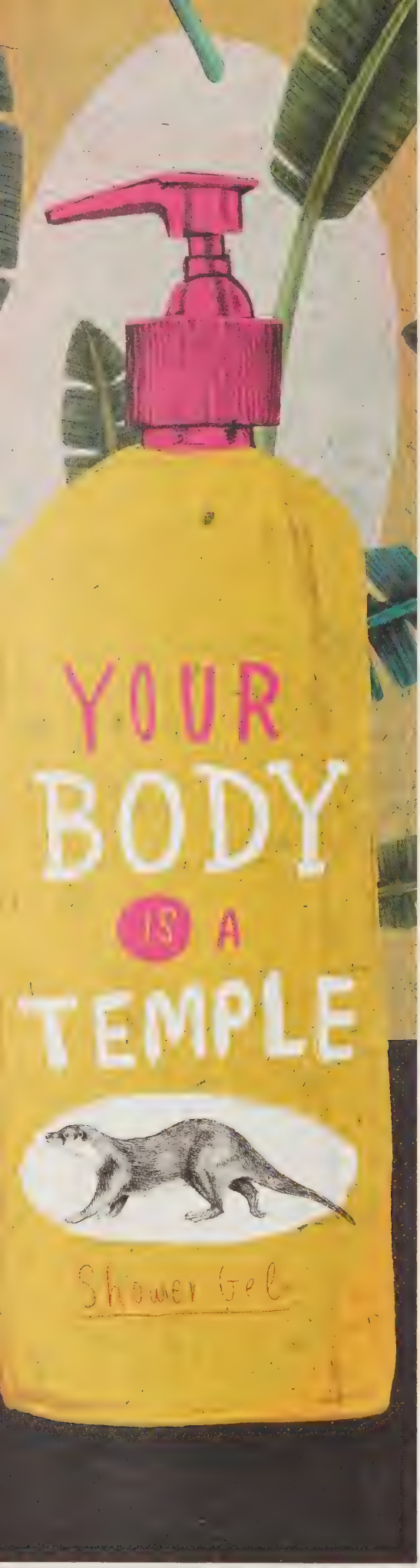
A family of four large otters were sprawled out on our dock. Two were cuddling and preening. The other two were butchering suckers. They had caught two white sucker fish the size of my arm and were consuming them from the head down. The other two otters eventually slipped into the water and then clamoured back onto the dock, each with a large squirming sucker in its mouth and tucked in. The dock was covered in blood, scales and grinning otters.

When each otter was done with its fish, which took the better part of half an hour, they looked like overworked fish mongers covered in a slurry of scales and sucker slime. Then they began a cleaning ritual that was as thorough as it was hilarious. They first found a portion of the dock that wasn't covered in sucker and scooted along it, vigorously wiping every part of their bodies from their whiskered noses down to their sleek, dark brown tails. When they were satisfied with this part of the body ritual they slithered into the water for a rinse and came and repeated the whole wipe-down process again, sometimes lending a hand to each other to preen their thick, rich brown fur. Finally, when this was done to their satisfaction they each proceeded to the lawn, had a good green grass rub and then humped up a bit, stamped their back legs whilst wiggling their hind end and had a pee that ended in a tail quiver. And then they were gone. We made it out the door and down the road silently, walking and praising God for a magnificent September morning. For me though, the morning had another twist to it.

I had been working with Romans 12:1. This biblical text raises the whole question of what we Christians do with our bodies. Otters apparently take their bodies very seriously. Cleaning, preening and pruning and generally tending to their bodies are rituals that I have watched them perform many times. These rituals do not appear to be based upon anything as human as vanity but is a natural part of taking their bodies seriously, kind of a health and welfare ritual. The morning's otter show just reminded me of this. It also reminded me of how some evangelical Christians focus so strongly on our hearts and souls in our walk with God that it almost seems we forget we have bodies as well. We tout phrases like, "Give your heart to God," or "Worship God in the spirit." Seldom do we mention our bodies and God in the same breath unless we are begging for healing for them. It's almost as though we are embarrassed by our bodies, like they are some kind of embarrassing spiritual encumbrance for our souls on one hand or that they have absolutely no spiritual value for our Christian living on the other.

It seems to me this kind of gnostic attitude leads in at least two wrong directions. On one hand we can find licence to abuse our bodies all we want, tattooing them, piercing them, stuffing them with fat to the point of obesity, letting them slip into unhealthy ugliness. On the other hand, we can ›

ILLUSTRATION BY BARRY FALLS



I think that for me at least, the journey to bringing my body into the realm of worshipping and glorifying God is going to take some very intentional decompartmentalization

find licence to use our bodies as mere receptors of pleasure—oversexualizing them, flaunting them, if it feels good, do it. We can use or abuse our bodies to our own ends or to Satan's ends all we want because our bodies apparently aren't really spiritual or important for spiritual purposes. But Paul says to the Romans: "I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (Romans 12:1).

Huh. From what Paul wrote to the Romans it appears to me that otters make better Christians than many of us who are busy giving God our hearts and worshipping God in spirit, yet treating our bodies like they are not part of the equation. From what Paul is writing as the word of God, we may not take our bodies very seriously as part of our Christian walk, but God certainly appears to. In another place, the apostle writes: "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

So as I ponder otters, scripture and this panting, potbellied person as he labours up a gentle hill on his morning walk, I am left with a question: How do I bring my body into the realm of worshipping and glorifying God? I don't have all the answers to that question yet, but it's beginning to dawn on me that I am really good at compartmentalizing my life, and that's a big part of the problem. I think that for me at least, the journey to bringing my body into the realm of worshipping and glorifying God is going to take some very intentional decompartmentalization.

John Piper has written a short but helpful article titled, "Bodies, Breakfast and the Marriage Bed" in which his opening premise is: "'Worship' is the term we use to cover all the acts of the heart and mind and body that intentionally express the infinite worth of God ... But don't think worship services when you think worship. That is a huge limitation which is not in the Bible. All of life is supposed to be worship... All of life is lived in the body. And the body is to be presented to God as our 'spiritual service of worship.' This is utterly sweeping."

Piper then goes on to consider a few implications of what he has written; food, sex and death are all aspects of life that are heavily rooted in the body. His insights are interesting and quite practical; well worth the read. (Visit desiringgod.org to find the article.) Again, the essence of his insights reflect the need to seriously decompartmentalize one's life. The result is that the morning breakfast table, the marriage bed and the deathbed are all discovered as places of worship, as God is given thanks and praise for the gifts received there.

After saying all this, the subject of worshipping God with my body is very much on the leading edge of my spiritual growth, and I have much more to reflect on and learn.

To be continued...

Rev. David Webber lives on the shore of Lac La Hache in B.C. His fourth book, When the Aspen Flowers *can be ordered through webberink@telus.net.*

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OCTOBER 2015

The BEGINNING of LIFE

A meditation on having stage four cancer.

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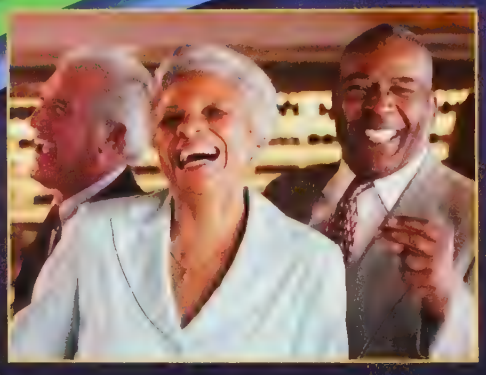

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FOR THE RECORD

God is Mystery

Thoughts on dying help reveal the nature of our Lord.

By David Harris

In a church ministry career that has spanned more than five decades, Rev. Dr. Tony Plomp has given the church many gifts. Or, as I suspect he would prefer I phrase it, the Spirit has used him to accomplish many wonderful things.

In this issue, he has given us all yet another extraordinary gift. It's an incredibly vulnerable gift—an essay on death and his own dying.

Tony's essay not only gives us an opportunity to talk about death—which senior editor Andrew Faiz does in a companion piece to our cover story—but about the nature of God.

One of the important concepts he raises is thinking of God as mystery. This is language that has been largely lost or ignored in Western Christianity, especially in Protestantism.

The historical and philosophical underpinnings of the Reformation emphasized describing God in "positive" terms—saying what God is: such as God is good, God is light, etc.

What was lost in that development was another ancient thread in Christianity that speaks of God in "negative" terms—what God is not: such as God is not-good, God is not-light.

Initially, this seems strange to us. But what it is getting at is that language is inadequate to describe God. God is indeed good—but God is also so far beyond any concept of good that we have that it limits God to say "God is good."

This way of speaking about God leads to the understanding that despite all we know about God through the lives of people, especially as recorded in the stories of the Bible, God is still beyond limited human understanding.

Initially, this idea can cause great anxiety. Ultimately, it has the ability to bring about the opposite effect. There is a letting go of all anxiety.

Tony addresses this with respect to the end of life. "What does it mean to embrace the Christian hope of life eternal? Some folk have told me they know exactly what that future will be like based on their reading of scripture. I confess that I do not know."

That is a humble statement from a man who not only knows his scriptures deeply but has lived and prayed them in a life of reflective faith.

But what he says is this: "It is a mystery as deep and profound as is the mystery of faith and the God in whom we place our trust. All I know is that God is at the centre of that mystery and so here, too, I confess that I believe 'He does all things well.'"

That is true confidence—not the confidence that presumes to understand everything about faith or scriptures—but the confidence that God surrounds us and loves us no matter what.

It is the confidence of Saint Paul, who said he was "convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

That love grounds us no matter how difficult things are. The world and the institutional church will always present us with anxieties and concerns. The current refugee crisis, building for several years now, is a major concern for us all. How will we care for all these displaced people?

(Andrew Faiz is in Eastern Europe as I am writing this and will be bringing back stories from the front line of the crisis there and how churches are helping.)

Like death itself, we will be able to face these challenges far better if we can join Tony and say that we place our trust in a God who "does all things well."

David Harris is the Record's *publisher and editor.*

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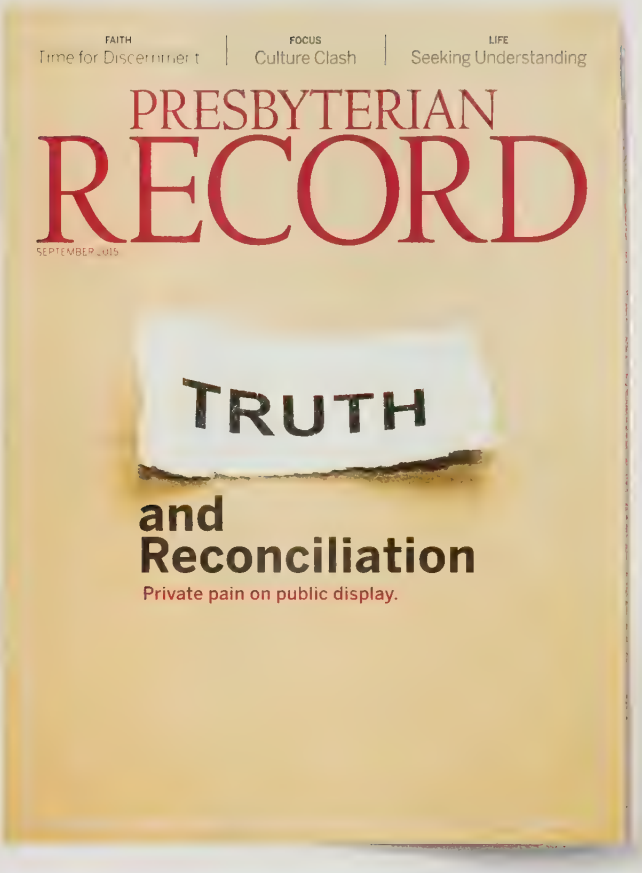

Why Do We Baptize?

I recently attended a baptism at a Catholic church and listened as the priest explained why the church baptizes. First, he stated that it was to cleanse the original sin committed by Adam and Eve. He mentioned other reasons but it was the first one that got me thinking about Christian theology on baptism. We all know that God came to earth in human form as Jesus Christ. He sacrificed himself and died on the cross to free us from our sin. Does this mean that the reason for baptism is not to cast away the original sin because obviously, Christ died on the cross for this sin and other sins? Should we just consider that baptism (which Christ went through to unite himself with God through the Holy Spirit) is the sacrament that unites us with Christ and his church and allows the Holy Spirit to come and dwell in us as we experience life with other Christians?

BRUCE COMPTON, PICKERING, ONT.

Dear Bruce:

This is the sort of question the Record *once carried a column for answering. Perhaps we'll publish something on the sacraments down the road. In the meantime, here's a very short reply.*

The church—by which I mean both East and West, Reformed and not—has held or emphasized various understandings over the centuries about both what is accomplished in baptism and by Jesus' death and resurrection. There is no one "correct" view. If you read the ›

Westminster Confession, you can see what the Scottish Calvinistic Reformers thought. But I suspect that is inadequate for most people today.

At the heart of your question—at the heart of Christian theology—is how humans can look forward to being in the presence of God in the next stage of life. That takes many forms—restoration, purification, theosis *(being made god-like), etc. Different denominations have different emphases. (If you look at the wiki on Atonement, you'll get a pretty good idea of the major themes throughout history.)*

In general, baptism reflects what a denomination (or the particular priest/minister) believes is most important about Jesus' life and death and what he effected in terms of humanity's relationship to God.

Hence, the variety of images in baptism itself: being washed and restored, being washed of sin, drinking the water of Life (some scholars think this may have been part of the baptismal rite in the church in Corinth), rising from the tomb, breaking the waters of the spiritual womb in rebirth, etc. As well as symbolizing the gift of the Spirit (symbolized in some churches by the ancient practice of signing the cross on the forehead with holy oil) and the sign of incorporation into the Christian family.

In short, your point—which is a very good one—is not necessarily an either/or. They are both orthodox Christian understandings among many.

Hope that's of some help.

DAVID HARRIS, EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

Ultimate Church Union

Because the story of Holy Week began with a political act, it is only just that every week began with a political act. What put our Lord to death was not the action of the Jews but the Roman imperial system. In consequence, our actions as Christians become inescapably political, the building of a city that abides. I see very little of this politicization—the direct action, non-violent accompaniment to the usual channels of parliamentary democracy—in the Presbyterian Church in Canada. We need to recall the illegal life of the early church, the church that worshipped in the catacombs among the dead, to see how far we have come.

We need to remember who we are as

disciples of Jesus, not Caesar, as members of Jesus' body which was whipped, tortured and glorified. Yet that very body was and is in union with God, and prayed for the unity of all the faithful.

This is why politicization and precocity in union with the poor and precarious labourers is not enough. The Presbyterian Church in Canada should disband and disappear into union with the Roman Catholic or the Orthodox Church. All Protestant distinctive and denominational differences can after all be found in either church. A concrete sign of love, of abnegation and self-emptying would go far to show the world how these Christians love one another! The sign of unity is two becoming one, of many becoming one and we can either spiritualize that away or we can choose life and not death. To quote the Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz, "The sacred exists and is stronger than all our rebellions."

JOSHUA WERESCH, HAMILTON, ONT.

Listening, Trusting, Learning

Re Do We Trust God? July/August

As a retired editor of the *Glad Tidings* magazine of the Women's Missionary Society for 24 years, I am pleasantly surprised to read the words of David Harris in the July/August issue. That this will be a year of "holy listening" for the PCC before General Assembly 2016 is most gratifying.

As editor I once put out an issue that was supposed to be about human sexuality. The material received leaned more towards homosexuality. There was an enormous backlash from readers, mostly negative and the *Glad Tidings* received more mail than ever before or since.

When I look back now I did a lot of "holy listening" that year. Perhaps my reflections will help others facing this task.

When I listen I hear the confusion and sorrow in a young woman's voice. Her fiancé had just committed suicide because he was gay.

I hear the outpouring of love in a mother's voice and her joy that there is a Presbyterian church where her son feels accepted.

I hear the sound of love in the cooing of a lesbian couple over their first child. They are ministering in the PCC.

I hear myself criticized for focusing too much on homosexuality. Where were the "heterosexuals" when their voices were needed?

I have been condemned for not "listening" to the voice of God through scripture. It may just be that I am reading other passages where Jesus met with the marginalized and was friend to all.

I pray that God will help open my eyes and my ears to the struggle of God's church and that I may hear anew the voices of God's people as they listen and respond to that which God is calling us as the Presbyterian Church in Canada. We should all, as David Harris says, strive to answer the question, "Do we trust God?"

L. JUNE STEVENSON, VIA EMAIL

Attention to Allergies

Re It's About Hospitality, January

Thanks to Amy MacLachlan for the helpful article on peanut allergies. This useful advice is in the spirit of Christian service and compatible with the Leading With Care policy. The Health Cabinet of St. Andrew's, Toronto, is using this information in its ongoing planning and expresses appreciation for it.

RICHARD ISAAC, TORONTO

All letters—taken from emails, by post, online comments and from the Presbyterian Record Community Facebook group—have been edited for space. There are many ways you can join the conversation, by pen or by keyboard. Share your voice.

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Vote With Vision

Chasing public opinion leads to the bottom. By Andrew Faiz

More as a lark, though with a little bit of seriousness, I turn each election to a growing number of online aids that help me work through the various issues. *Maclean's Magazine* has one called Policy Face-Off Machine. You are asked to choose between at least 20 different policy pairings, after which the machine will tell you which federal political party you should vote for.

As I start I am given two options: "Bolster RCMP budget for crack down on grow-ops and meth labs." Or, "Support the expansion of the Universal Child Care Benefit."

As you can tell these issues are not comparable; but I have to choose one. I have to choose which one of these two is more important to me. So, I do and then I move to the next random choices: "Create a publicly accessible database of high-risk child sex offenders." Or, "Reject calls for an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women."

While the first random choice was relatively easy for me, this second one is difficult. I certainly would not reject a call for an inquiry, but I'm also not convinced a public shaming list will help society significantly. But I have to choose one.

The CBC has its Vote Compass. Here I have to go through dozens of questions and rate their importance to me. The first question asks, "How involved should the Canadian military be in the fight against ISIS?" I have to choose from Much Less to Much More.

Do not settle for the politicians' desperate need for power; let your faith instruct your vision for Canada

Both of these very different processes will come to a similar conclusion placing me in a rough tie between the three major parties. My internal confused compass had already told me that, but I guess it's good to have it confirmed. I end up voting more emotionally than intellectually.

Still the online result isn't exactly accurate. These aids are issue-based, and issues are shifting sand, moving between parties constantly. There's a parable about shifting sand. Jesus proves more prescient than ever in this election. Political parties are opportunistic. The government says they'll do X; challenging parties come up with variations on X, every now and then pulling from completely different alphabets. A party that might have preached austerity in opposition becomes a free spender in power; a party that fought free trade in one era becomes its defender in another.

That's why our potential leaders are always polling us so they can reflect back to us what they think we believe. Chasing public opinion leads to the bottom. A politician can always find broad public favour in the lowest common denominator.

As you head to the ballot box this month, do not shove your faith into your politics. Let your civic sensibility be motivated by Christ, by the Beatitudes, by the Lord's Prayer, by the Golden Rule, by the parables. Do not settle for the politicians' desperate need for power; let your faith instruct your vision for Canada.

There is never either/or; the vision we feed our politicians has to come from our faithful reflections. The economy is important, so is feeding the hungry, clothing the naked; security is important, so is embracing the stranger; we may have to go to war at times, but we also have to provide relief and development. This is church at its best; and it should be our national standard.

Andrew Faiz is the Record's *senior editor.*

BULLETIN

Community and World News

Refugees wait for buses at a train station in Croatia, hoping to move closer to safety and stability.

CP IMAGES

IN THE NEWS

'We Cannot Just Shut Our Eyes'

Presbyterians respond to the Syrian refugee crisis. By Connie Wardle

With the ongoing plight of Syrian refugees making headlines around the world, more and more Presbyterians are asking how their churches can help support refugees and sponsor them to come to Canada.

Rob Shropshire, Presbyterian World Service & Development's refugee coordinator, said during the first few weeks of September he saw "a big spike in interest" in refugee sponsorship.

Most of the phone calls and emails have been coming from groups that are still exploring the idea. But there are already 12 Presbyterian churches and two presbyteries in various stages of the refugee sponsorship process. Together they're seeking to sponsor a total of 105 refugees from 11 countries.

The Pickering presbytery is one of those groups. Their sponsorship of Syrian refugees began last spring when the presbytery's mission and outreach committee and an Arabic-speaking mission began wondering if there was work they could do together.

Rev. Ibrahim Wahby is an Egyptian-Canadian pastor and founder of the Life in Christ (LinC) ministry. He launched the Arabic mission in 2012 and today holds worship in three locations each week—two in different areas of Toronto and one in Cambridge.

He said the sponsorship really began with prayer. His congregation, which includes people born in a ›

IN THE NEWS, continued

Demonstrators at a rally in support of refugees, Sept. 17, 2015.

number of countries including Syria, prayed frequently for members of families still in the region.

"When we start to pray, I got this idea to support some families," he said. "I went back to the congregation, they encouraged me, so we took the next step. I went to the presbytery, to the mission committee ... and I shared my heart about the people who are in crisis overseas. And thank God the presbytery got the idea, supported the idea, endorsed it. The whole idea started like that."

To sponsor a refugee family, a church group needs to raise sufficient funds to prove they can support them for one year. For a family of four, that's in the range of $25,000-$30,000.

"We went to the presbytery and said, 'Okay, here's what we need: $27,000 or thereabouts. Could you start going to your congregations and seeing what we could raise?'" said Rev. Jeremy Bellsmith, who was then convener of the mission and outreach committee. "Well, within a few months over $130,000 had been raised."

According to Liz Stark, an elder at Fallingbrook, Toronto, and a member of the committee, of the 25 churches in the presbytery 14 or so held fundraisers to raise money for the sponsorship.

"I think very much it has been a presbytery-wide initiative and each church has contributed," she said.

Having beaten their initial fundraising goal almost five times over, the presbytery agreed to sponsor five families instead of one.

But raising money is only one part of a long and often tedious process. "The learning curve, believe me, has been really steep," Stark said.

She and Fouad Helal, a member of the LinC ministry, worked together to fill out the refugee application forms. The five families represent 18 people in total, and all adults—including children over 19—must have their own application form. That meant filling out forms for 10 people.

A year after raising the funds necessary to sponsor the refugee families, the applications for two of the families had been submitted. At press time two were very close to being done and one was still in process.

"It's almost humiliating when you have churches that step forward keen to sponsor ... and then it can take months and months to prepare the applications because the government has been so rigorous in terms of insisting that the very complex applications are filled out correctly and consistently," said Shropshire, PWS&D's refugee coordinator.

Long wait times for refugees and sponsors and bureaucratic red tape are some of the issues many organizations have been calling for the government to address in the face of the current crisis.

Several major social justice groups, including the Canadian Council for Refugees and Amnesty International, jointly released a set of recommendations that include allocating more resources to speed up the processing of refugee applications, implementing measures to make it easier for Syrians to come to Canada if they already have family members living in the country, and smoothing the way for groups to privately sponsor refugees. (You can find all the recommendations at ccrweb.ca).

The organizations also called for the government to fund the resettlement of at least 10,000 Syrian refugees this year over and above the number of refugees Canada normally resettles.

The Canadian government has pledged to accept 10,000 Syrian refugees by September 2016, but most are expected to be supported by private sponsors like church groups.

On Sept. 19, Immigration Minister Chris Alexander announced the government would designate Syrians who have fled their homes as "prima facie refugees," meaning they would no longer need to go through the long process of proving they qualify as refugees before they could be sponsored to Canada. He also announced the government would be increasing staffing at its application processing centre in Winnipeg and in visa offices abroad, and would seek to ensure the majority of current and future Syrian and Iraqi refugee applications are processed within six months.

PHOTO BY CONNIE WARDLE

There are more than 4 million Syrian refugees, many living below the poverty line, most of them in five countries: Turkey (1.9 million), Lebanon (1.2 million), Jordan (650,000), Iraq (almost 250,000) and Egypt (over 130,000). According to the UNHCR, 400,000 of them are in need of resettlement.

In early September, the Moderator of the 2015 General Assembly wrote a letter to the prime minister urging the government to "do more to respond" to the plight of Syrian refugees.

"The Church is concerned that Canada is not playing its traditional role in responding to UNHCR resettlement appeals, and thus is not fulfilling its international responsibilities," Rev. Karen Horst wrote on behalf of the PCC. "Rather, the government is putting too much of the onus of the Canadian response on to private sponsors."

The letter was the result of a recommendation passed by General Assembly in June that asked the Moderator and members of the church to write to the government "urging that the number of government-sponsored refugees be increased to, at a minimum, match the number of privately sponsored refugees."

The assembly also asked the Moderator to urge the government to "increase its annual contribution to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees." This request was also included in Horst's letter to the prime minister.

Canada has been providing record amounts to the UNHCR to assist refugees in the region, Shropshire noted, though in mid-September the UN's international appeal was only 40 per cent funded. Providing funding for refugees and internally displaced persons is also a vital part of responding to the crisis. More than half of Syria's population has been displaced by the conflict.

"Part of the reason people are doing a secondary migration into Europe from Turkey is that the situation in Turkey is so bleak for refugees and the sheer numbers that are there," said Shropshire. "The living conditions are bad and there's no hope for the future."

"Refugee resettlement is not the only solution to the problem, and no one is saying it's the only solution," he said. "But at the same time, there's no immanent solution in Syria either." There's no expectation that people who have fled the country will be able to return, and no peace process to suggest the conflict could be over any time soon. "And in the meantime refugees need some kind of hope for a solution."

Huda Kandalaft, director of Christian development at St. Andrew's, Ottawa, has family living as displaced persons in Syria and others in Jordan and Lebanon. Their homes were destroyed and for four years they have been renting small apartments in villages.

"Their savings have ended after four years of paying rent—high rent," she said. "Prices have tripled. The dollar is now—in the beginning of the event it used to be 50 Syrian pounds to a dollar, now it's 180. So you can imagine how these people who are jobless now, who are paying rent in a village near a minor city, who can't go back to their home because it's destroyed, how long they can last?"

Her congregation has sponsored several refugees in recent years, and this year is sponsoring a Syrian family.

PWS&D has also been responding, working through its partnerships with ACT Alliance and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. For every dollar donated to PWS&D for its work with Syrian refugees before Dec. 31st, the Canadian government is contributing one dollar to its Syria Emergency Relief Fund.

"It's our call as a church primarily to care for our neighbours, not just those who are in our local community but also around the world," said Kandalaft. "And as we watch the news and listen to stories coming and headlines everyday we cannot just shut our eyes."

To learn more about refugee sponsorship visit presbyterian.ca/pwsd.

Connie Wardle is the Record*'s senior writer and online editor.*

WINNIPEG MINISTER RELEASES FIRST BOOK IN FANTASY SERIES FOR YOUNG READERS

Matthew David Brough has released the first installment of his fiction adventure series. *Del Ryder and the Crystal Seed* officially launched in his hometown of Winnipeg in July.

The story centres on an 11-year-old girl looking for a sense of belonging who, with her three best friends, enters a portal to the mystical world of Azdia. The residents of the newly discovered planet believe that Del Ryder and her friends are their only hope to bring light back to their world. The book includes themes of forgiveness, restoration, sacrifice, and community—elements in an ethic that Brough views as not overtly Christian.

"My hope is that parents and grandparents will read this and other books and talk about them with the children in their lives," said Brough, pastor of Prairie Presbyterian. The book can be purchased online through Amazon. *—Laura Heming*

OPINION

We Are All Sojourners

Does Canada need a National Immigration Day?

By Roland De Vries

"Canada is a nation of immigrants." It is a truism, of course, but one that sometimes needs defending. From the first waves of non-aboriginal immigrants (the French and British), to the most recent waves from China, India and the Philippines, Canada is a nation built by those "from away." This is true even of the Aboriginal peoples, whose ancient ancestors seem most likely to have arrived 30,000 years ago via a land bridge from Asia.

My own parents are immigrants to Canada, having arrived from the Netherlands in 1951 and 1952 respectively. They know what it is to adapt to a new culture, to learn a new language, and to start over again making friends and family connections in a foreign country, in a way I likely never will.

One thing that sometimes surprises me is how quickly the second generation (myself included) becomes at home in a new place. And how quickly that generation begins to see more recent immigrants as strangers—they are somehow odd; not a natural part of the landscape.

In his book entitled *Christians at the Border*, M. Daniel Carroll offers a helpful survey of scriptural perspectives on migration, immigration and refugees. And one element of his survey that is particularly interesting is the reminder that the people of Israel, even once they had entered the land of promise—had "taken possession" of it—were defined as sojourners in the land.

As much as they were at home there—and as much as God provided them a space and time to live as His people—they were also to know themselves, perpetually, as sojourners. Not quite at home. Aliens and outsiders in the land they themselves inhabited.

> The immigrant spirit defines us, and should define us in relation to one another and the land—no matter how long we have been here

Perhaps this would help them remember the priority of God in their lives; or remind them to offer a gracious welcome to sojourners in their midst; or help them realize God's people are always on the move toward a life that more fully reflects God's reign.

Which brings me back to how the second or third generation can become at home and comfortable in their country. It has become their country, they are at home, and they are the host. We were immigrants, but now we are at home.

I wonder whether we need a National Immigration Day in Canada—a day dedicated to remembering we are all sojourners in a land that is not fully ours to possess or claim or to be at home in. Not a day, in other words, to remember or acknowledge those who have "just arrived." And not even a day simply to tell the story of our own family's immigration, a story everyone can tell in some way. Rather, a day to reflect on what it means that each one of us is an immigrant/sojourner.

Yes, we already have Pier 21 in Halifax, and we have Canada Day, and we have a vast literature (in fiction and nonfiction) that speaks to the immigrant reality. But we have no specific day set aside to remember the immigrant nature of Canadians and of human beings in general.

Perhaps we need something more, perhaps a day of poetry and songs and readings and public events and free gallery visits, to recall our sojourning nature. The immigrant spirit defines us, and should define us in relation to one another and the land—no matter how long we have been here!

For followers of the risen Jesus, this possibility is compelling. Yes, we are at home with Christ in the world, yet we await and work toward a kingdom and a form of life that is future. We are not at home. We are all sojourners.

Rev. Dr. Roland De Vries is director of pastoral studies at Presbyterian College, Montreal. He blogs at Encrusted Words, found at presbyterianrecord.ca.

Faith.

Deepening your relationship with God

ISTOCK

LEADERSHIFT

Call and Answer

Mentoring the next generation of leaders.

By Ross Lockhart

"The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread." This foreboding Old Testament language that opens the scene of God's call of Samuel might just as easily show up in many congregational annual reports these days. In a time of institutional uncertainty, it is all too easy for mainline Canadian Christians to look longingly to the past and forward in fear. As one who is privileged to be a "pastor seconded to the seminary" for this season of my life, I am all too aware of how recruitment for ministry is a challenge in the church and theological education. Where will we get the next generation of quality leaders for Christ's church? How do we discern the right kind of leaders so that we end up with, to borrow language from my friend Stephen Farris, ministers not of mischief ›

LEADERSHIFT, continued

How might you help someone discover God-given talents for leadership in the way that a wise elder once helped you long ago?

or maintenance but mission?

In the Reformed tradition, the essential work of noticing, naming and nurturing God's vocational call to ministry is in the hands of sessions and presbyteries. Our *Book of Forms* Section 202 says: "Sessions and presbyteries are enjoined to make diligent and careful inquiry whether any individuals ... should be specially directed to the claims of Christ upon them with respect to the ministry ... to aid and encourage in all proper ways suitable young men and women ... to consecrate themselves to this sacred vocation." Many of us have warm and wonderful stories of teaching and ruling elders from our past who encouraged us to take steps towards leadership in Christ's Church.

For many years I have worked with the Atlanta-based Forum for Theological Exploration (FTE). Established in the 1950s by Christian businesspeople and seminary presidents who were concerned about the decreasing quality of ministerial candidates, the Fund for Theological Education (as it was first called) has generously provided financial assistance to young adults preparing for the ministry. FTE has also offered support to congregations so that they might develop healthier cultures of call by equipping Christians to discover, in Frederick Buechner's language, their vocation as "the place where our deep gladness meets the world's deep need." My last congregation was a test site for FTE's VoCARE program and we benefitted greatly from the discipline of engaging members of all ages in the practice of discernment and testimony (fteleaders.org/resources/fte-guide-to-vocation-care). Now that I serve on the FTE Board of Trustees, I am studying carefully how different denominations are living into the vocational vision to "Call Young Leaders. Ignite the Church. Change the World." In an increasingly secular and consumerist North American society, denominations of all shades are asking where will the "Samuels" of this next generation come from?

While the Hannahs and Elkanahs of our family of origin are important, I am especially interested in the particular and peculiar role of Eli the priest in helping Samuel notice, name and nurture God's call to ministry. Samuel, of course, was gifted and blessed by God. In fact, he was dedicated as a nazirite and had a much better track record in that role than Samson ever did. Even so, in the famous call story of 1 Samuel 3, it is of critical importance that Eli helps Samuel interpret the doxological ringtone in the night as God's own voice. "Go back to bed camp counselor/youthpastor/undergraduate/millennial," interprets the wise Eli, and next time say, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening."

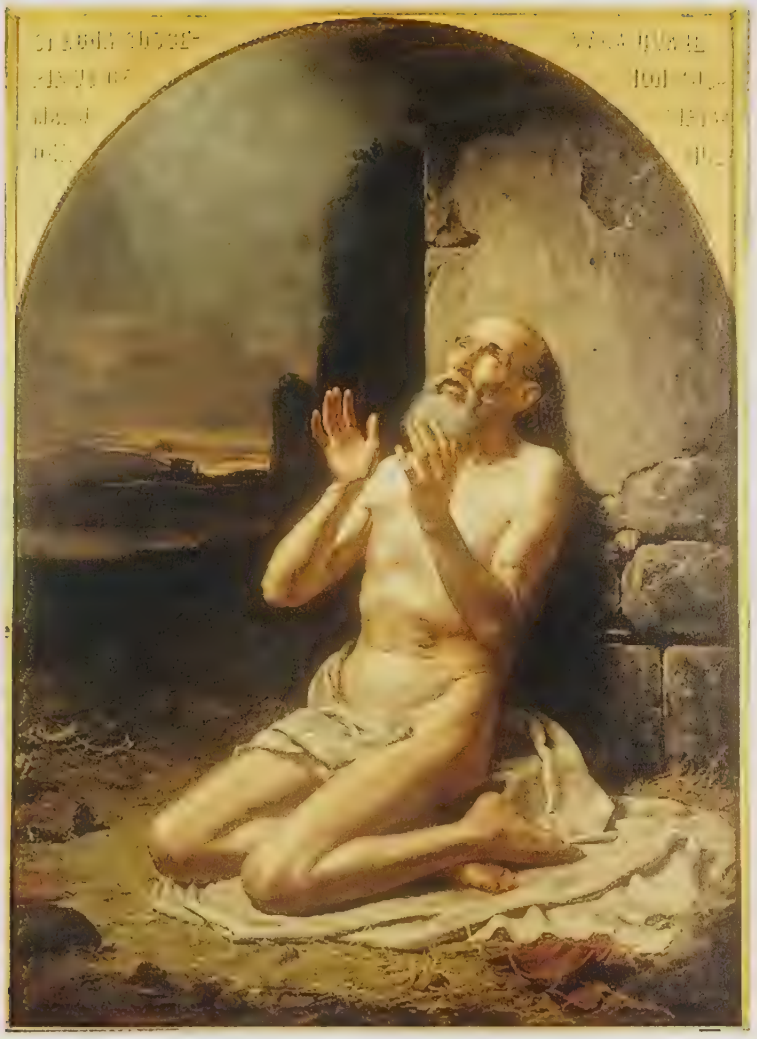
What if we tempered our worry over where future leaders might come from by asking God to activate and equip the Elis in our Presbyterian pulpits and pews for vocational conversations that can change lives for good? Elis like the women and men whose love for the Lord Jesus is naturally expressed in their support and care of young people in their church and community. Who might that young person be that God is calling you to play the role of Eli for this year? How might you help someone discover God-given talents for leadership in the way that a wise elder once helped you long ago? The good news is that you do not need to be perfect to be a vocational ally of God. After all, Eli's pastoral care at first with Hannah had her mistaken for a drunk and Eli's own sons were so bad they must have been the source of the original PK (Preacher's Kids) jokes. No, you don't need to be perfect, only pliable like clay in the hands of the master potter.

We need Elis throughout our life of service and the ongoing discernment of discipleship. Elis not only serve God's purpose by noticing, naming and nurturing the call to young leaders before ordination, but afterwards as well. Many of us can tell stories of how kindly Elis got us out of all sorts of trouble in the early years of our ministry.

I was talking recently with 93-year-old Rev. Maurice McLeod. Maurice was the wise old Eli and minister emeritus in a church that I served in eastern Ontario. God blessed our congregation with a revival but it did not come without its detractors. Many a time I heard stories of people grumbling "about that praise music" and "too many noisy kids in church" to which Maurice, my Eli, would say in a voice loud enough to reach both ends of the 613 area code, "I know, isn't it wonderful what God is doing in this place? There are lots of dead churches to choose from if you'd prefer some place a little more quiet."

Okay, so perhaps not exactly, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening" but when it comes to supporting young leaders in the church: Help Wanted—more Elis please.

Rev. Dr. Ross Lockhart is associate professor and director of the Centre for Missional Leadership at St. Andrew's Hall, Vancouver.



Job on the Dunghill, 1881 by Gonzalo Carrasco.

PROGRESSIVE LECTIONARY

The Dark Side of Grace

Trusting God when we feel closer to Job than to Jesus.

By Laurence DeWolfe

Readings from Job for Year B,
All Sundays in October

I offer preachers who will wrestle with Job this month my heartfelt sympathies. You will wrestle, as generations of preachers have wrestled, to wring messages from the texts that the lectionary has already wrenched out of context.

Scholars mostly agree that the story of Job is fiction. Some call it the first novel. It isn't a fable. We can't coax morals out of each episode. We can point to Job's infamous non-comforters and say, "Don't be like Bildad the Shuhite! Be kind, and listen to those who suffer." Sound advice. Short sermon. We can point out the deficiencies in Eliphaz's Temanite theology, and end up preaching ›

In the end, all there is, is trust: submission to the will of a God who can only be good, even when we can't believe it

against at least half of the whole Old Testament. We can make Job a hero and Zophar the Naamathite a villain. The villain of the tale is actually God, who makes a bet at Job's expense and rains suffering down on an innocent man to make a point. Point made, God becomes the real hero! Job's nobody. Rich again, but not very important.

In its time, when the whole idea of Hebrew scripture was in its infancy, the faithful people who first told Job's story were engaged in a theological battle. In the Old Testament that we know it's clear neither side won, but both proclaimed victory. The authors of Job put the popular theology of their day in the mouths of Job's friends. But the whole tale is an argument against any idea that God can be contained in ritual, controlled by the obedience of the faithful, and commanded to bless those who prove their worthiness through their wealth.

God is bigger than anyone can ever dare imagine. God's ways with the universe, and with little beings like Job, are beyond comprehension or prediction. Living a good life is good in itself, but it has no bearing on a soul's fate. In the end, Job's redemption—if we can call it that—is by grace. Is he a better man than he was? Richer, yes. His enlightened attitude to the place of women in his family suggests he has learned something. Neither wealth nor enlightenment reaches beyond death, though they may last 140 years.

In the end, all there is, is trust: submission to the will of a God who can only be good, even when we can't believe it. We heirs of John Calvin agree with that, don't we? Our Muslim neighbours certainly do. The Arabic word *islam* sums it up.

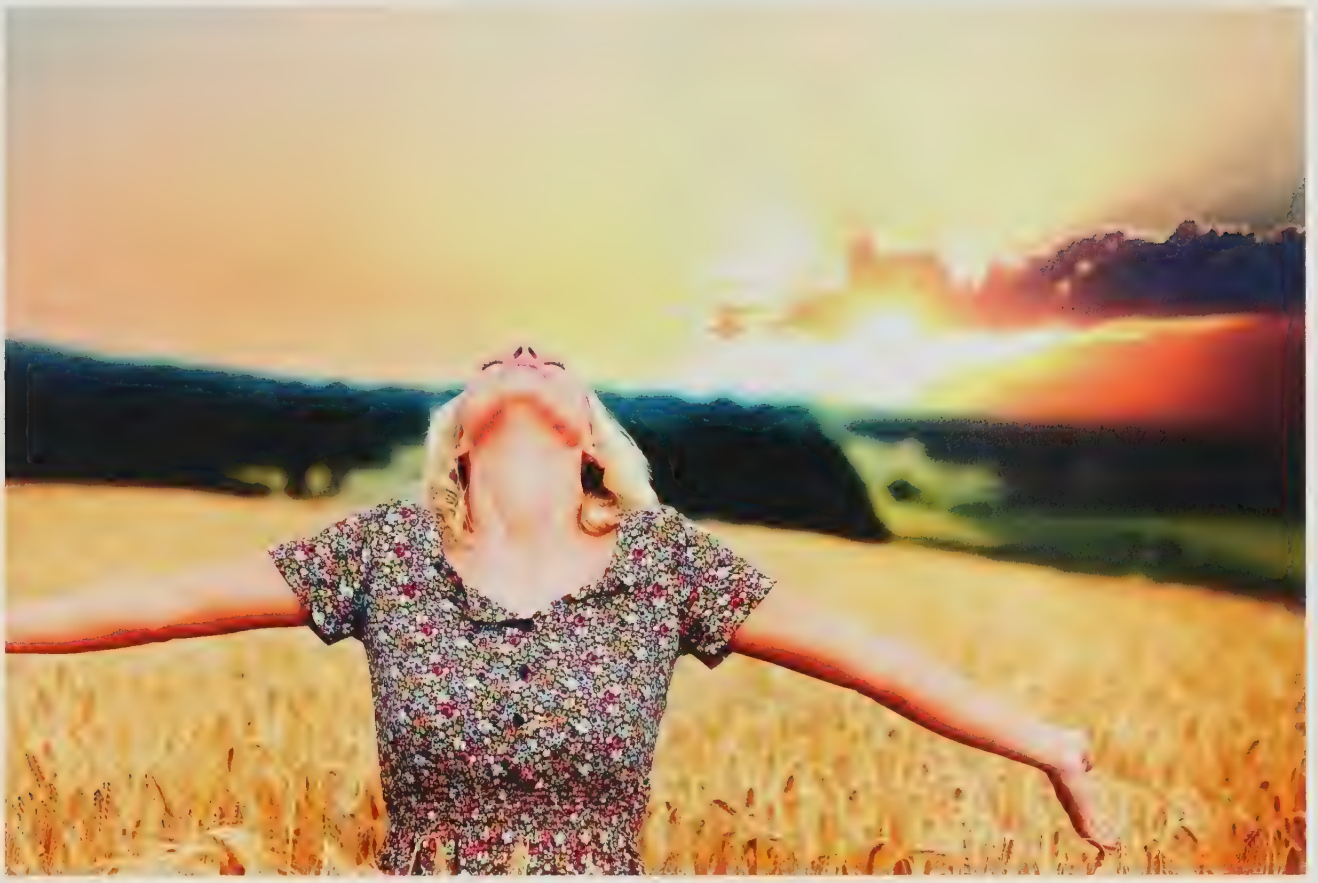
We Christians never speak of grace apart from words about Jesus. The Book of Job is all about grace. We might say it's the dark side, or the hard edge of grace. Frederick Buechner wrote that grace means, "There is nothing *you* have to do. There is nothing you *have* to do. There is nothing you have to *do*." We can say "amen" to that when we reflect on our ultimate fate. We can say "amen" when we're feeling good, lucky, blessed. God must be smiling on us! What about those times when we're close to cursing God and wishing we were dead? Even those moments when we feel bad, unlucky, and sinned against? Can we trust when we can't find any grace? When we feel closer to Job than to Jesus?

Job's story asks "what if?" It calls us to explore the limitlessness of God's sovereignty and freedom. To imagine what God's absolute claim on us might just mean. Job's story represents one Hebrew voice in the early days of a conversation that continues. Job's story tells us something we dare not forget. It doesn't tell us everything about God's ways with the world, or with you and me.

Have fun with Job's story. It drips with irony. There are twists and jokes throughout.

Rev. Dr. Laurence DeWolfe teaches at Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax.

JOINED TOGETHER AS GOD'S DWELLING PLACE
WE ARE HOME
EPHESIANS 2:20-22
CY2016
YOUTH • DISCIPLESHIP • LEADERSHIP
July 5-10, 2016 • Brock University, St. Catharines, ON
presbyterian.ca/cy2016



ISTOCK

RENEWAL

Remembering Thanksgiving

Gratitude leads to abundant life.

By Fred Stewart

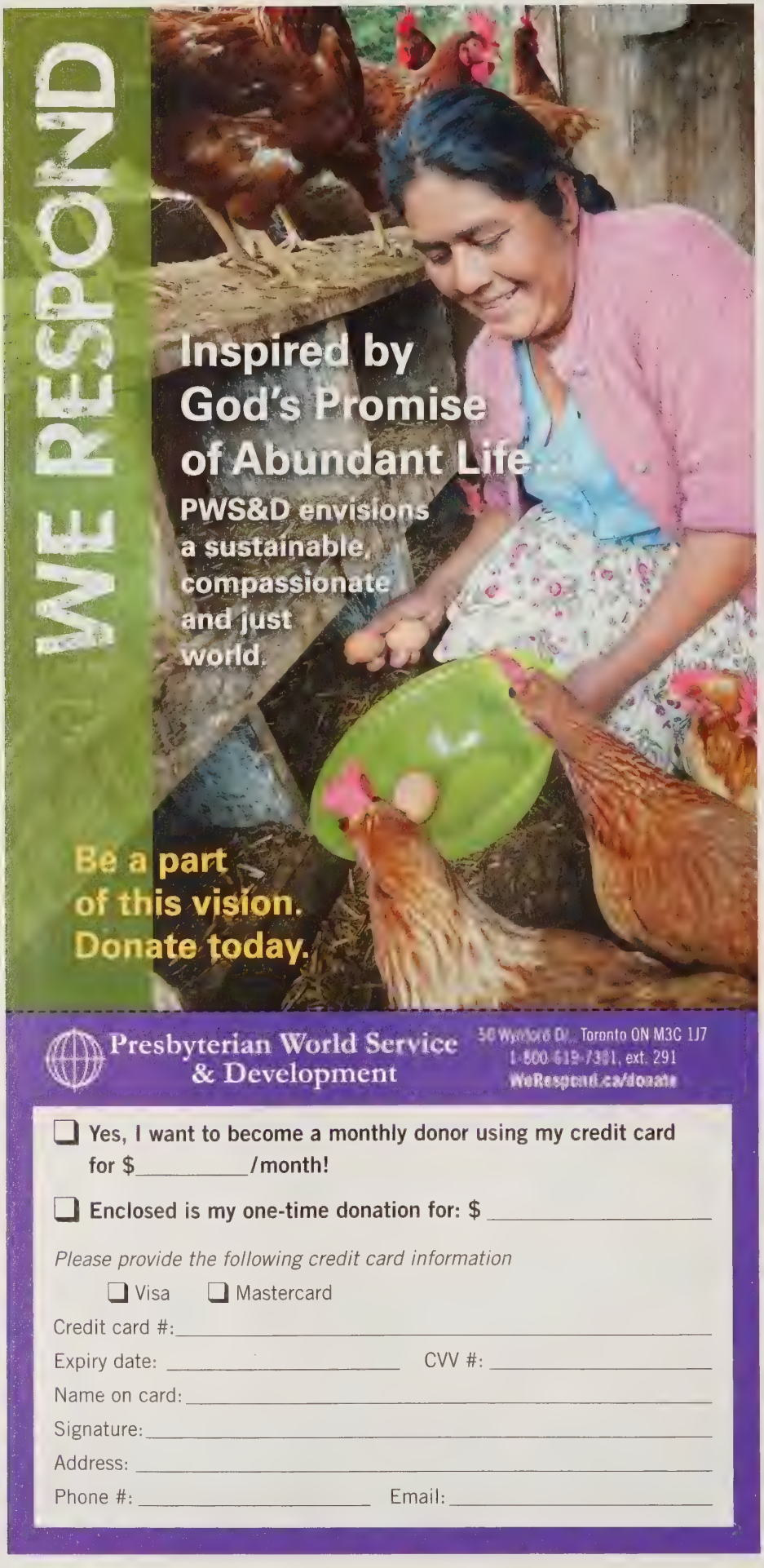
O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever (Psalm 136:1).

September is one of the busiest months of the year for me. I think only December exceeds it. And somehow I always seem unprepared and overwhelmed by the switch from mellow, laidback summer to "pedal-to-the-metal."

I often find myself feeling over-committed, over-stressed and over-concerned. Usually, within a few weeks, my slow moving mind remembers that I cannot survive now, or at any other time, on my own strength and resources.

So again this year I know I am not trusting enough and not listening enough to that quiet, small voice that we can discern if we take the time to listen. And for me it is not just enough to listen; it is a further requirement that I act on what I hear.

What has this to do with Thanksgiving? For me ›



RENEWAL, continued

there is a process of being reminded that I am not without great help and extraordinary resources in Christ. It reminds me that I am loved beyond my understanding and beyond the limits of time and space.

When I rehearse in my mind and heart, clearly at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, all that I have in Christ and how much I am loved, that gratitude begins to bubble up. Supernaturally the gratitude begins to replace the stress and refocuses me on a better set of priorities and a more effective action plan.

Gratitude is a pathway to living more in line with the "abundant life" promised by Jesus. Gratitude is also the doorway to more authentic worship.

So, as you consider Thanksgiving this year, may you take the time to consider how absolutely life-changing and redemptive the love of God in Christ is for we who follow him.

May we cry out with the psalmist our thanks to the God who is good and whose love endures forever. May it open wellsprings of worship within our hearts.

"Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

"As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.'

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:35-37).

Rev. Fred Stewart is executive director of the Renewal Fellowship and minister at St. Andrew's, Bolsover, and Woodville Community churches.

ISTOCK

ORDINARY RADICAL

The Mark of a Good Christian

Practising hospitality. By Amy MacLachlan

Sara, a good friend from my college days in Alberta, always had extra people in her childhood home. Whenever I visited, the house was bustling with noise and busyness. The house itself was nothing special; not big or fancy or especially neat and tidy. But people came. And people stayed. Out-of-town family members, international students, church members in need. Sara's father is a pastor, so their home was always the place where people felt they could go to have their needs met, their concerns listened to, their problems solved.

To me, who grew up in a home that hosted very few overnight guests and everything was done decently and in good order (and we weren't even Presbyterian!), the sometimes crazy, messy, loud home life that Sara was used to was odd and even uncomfortable. At that point I had little knowledge or understanding of the Bible's teachings on hospitality. It never crossed my mind that opening your home to a friend (or stranger!) in need is something we might all do well to consider.

For my seven-year-old daughter, this kind of ›

ORDINARY RADICAL, continued

hospitality is a no-brainer. On a particularly freezing winter night last year, I mentioned that we should think of the people who don't have a home. Her response? "Well why don't they just knock on someone's door and they can let them in?"

Hmmm... "For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat," begins the infamous lesson in Matthew 25:35, "I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited me in."

You invited me in. Is it as simple as that?

Rev. Joel Sherbino and his wife Rebecca (a couple I've mentioned before!) make hospitality a conscious choice in their life and ministry.

Joel is the minister at Paris Presbyterian, though he, Rebecca and their three kids are currently in Malawi for a year (they were there as missionaries for three years not quite a decade ago).

"There were always people living with us," Joel told me of their previous stint in Africa. "People knew they could just show up at our house."

The Sherbinos say it was in Malawi that they realized they loved to host, and where they started to dream about how they could continue this ministry once they returned to Canada.

"We bought a house based on the fact that it would be good for hosting," said Joel. "We see the house as part of the ministry we're involved in. It's an opportunity."

People can drop in for coffee, or stay over for many nights.

"It's about leveraging what you have for the benefits of others," said Joel.

In Romans 12, it is said that one of the marks of a true Christian is "extending hospitality to strangers."

The idea is certainly something we should think about, especially given the current refugee crisis.

Imagine packing up a few basic belongings and stealing off in the night, headed for who-knows-where, as long as it's safer than your home. Your home. Imagine the feeling of your home not being a safe place. Imagine leaving that place for a strange land; often making a perilous journey to reach it. Now imagine reaching your destination and then being turned away. Borders closed. Doors shut. The prospect of respite and safety an unrealized dream.

The idea of hospitality is something Shane Claiborne speaks about a lot in his books. In *The Irresistible Revolution*, he tells a story of walking by a prostitute in his neighbourhood and asking her to come to his home to share a meal. And she does. And it seems almost normal to do such a thing.

In *Jesus for President: Politics for Ordinary Radicals,* Claiborne says that as Christians, we need to expand our ideas of family—even across geographical lines.

"Fabricated boundaries and walls are removed for the Christian," Claiborne writes. "One's neighbour is not only from Chicago but also from Baghdad. One's brother or sister in the church could be from Iran or California—no difference! Our family is transnational and borderless; we are in Iraq, and we are in Palestine. And if we are indeed to become born again, we will have to begin talking like it, changing the meaning of we, us, my, and our."

When we stop talking about "us and them" and instead only of "we," we are left with no choice but to open our doors to others.

Amy MacLachlan is the Record's *managing editor.*

OCTOBER CHALLENGE
Hospitality

I get it. Not everyone can see themselves inviting a prostitute to dinner or welcoming refugees to stay in their home for a month or more. (And if you can see yourself doing that, well, you're awesome.) Joel Sherbino noted that we all have gifts in different areas, and hospitality may not be yours. So, what can we do? (Particularly given that pesky "ultimate Christian" list in Romans 12!)

In an article from *Today's Christian Woman*, Marsha Crockett writes: "I'm learning that ... friendliness has much to do with a hospitable heart. It's a symbolic act of 'leaving the door open' to other visits and deeper conversations." Such conversations don't necessarily have to happen at home. What about inviting someone out for coffee?

And, if you do open your home, relax! "True hospitality invites people over even though the house still might need a fresh vacuuming," writes pastor Justin Deeter on his self-titled blog. "The purpose of inviting others into your home is to serve them, not to impress them."

Lastly, think about ways to be hospitable beyond your own doors. Find out if there are organizations in your community that help new immigrants, or get together with like-minded people at church and discuss ways that your congregation can welcome strangers. (Visit PWS&D's page at presbyterian.ca/pwsd/refugee-sponsorship to find out more about sponsoring refugees). There's so much we can do. Good luck!

Life

Thoughts and inspiration for your daily life

THE CANADIAN PRESS/DARRYL DYCK

REFLECTION

His Name Was Alan

A reflection on a photo that woke up the world. By Becky Roushorne-Lau

I think of a boy, the boy named Alan Kurdi. I think of his family and the great loss that was his life. The desire for freedom, for a chance at life. The desperation they felt and the great risk they felt they had to take.

My heart hangs heavy. So many things pass through my mind as I live through this day. I think of this boy as I chop food for dinner, as I play on the floor with my boys, as I move and live and breathe in my taken-for-granted freedom. I think of the things that need to happen, that must change. I sit down. I write. I write letters to our candidates as they ›

REFLECTION, continued

At times it may feel lonely and overwhelming but there are others who cry out alongside us and fight for justice in a world that at times may seem dark. We also have God who sends us His peace, strength and grace

campaign for a seat in parliament. Will they do something, anything to help these people? It's not enough. It's not enough to write. We as a people of freedom must do something, anything, to help in some way.

In this world we are hit with image after image in a stream of constant updates and entertainments. We must not allow Alan to become yesterday's news, a faded memory in a stream of consciousness. We must see the world around us. We must see the pain, the despair, the longing for a life that we take for granted.

Seeing is hard. Seeing feels at times so painful that we long to shut our eyes, we wish we could turn away. We must not do this, cannot do this if we are to be people of the light. We must find ways to be a people who act. We are called to be a people who act by one who was himself forced to flee an oppressive regime. We are a people who from the beginning were encouraged to protect the stranger and accept those from far away.

"The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 19:34).

How do we do this? How do we love the strangers who are so far away? How do we help them, protect them, guard them?

I do not know the answers to these questions but I suspect we must begin by raising our voice. By opening our hearts, churches and homes and saying to the suffering people that they are welcome here, they will find a home among us. We are called to do this. We are called to "share with the Lord's people who are in need" (Romans 12:13), practising hospitality. We must raise our voices and encourage our leaders to offer assistance, provide sanctuary and support.

As we fight it is important to remember we do not fight this alone. At times it may feel lonely and overwhelming but there are others who cry out alongside us and fight for justice in a world that at times may seem dark.

We also have God who sends us His peace, strength and grace. This grace, this gift of relentless love, is one we must cling to. God is relentless in His desire to reach His people and God will go with us. As Frederick Buechner says: "The grace of God means something like: ... Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don't be afraid. I am with you."

God is indeed with us and as we go forth, God goes with us. Let us take God into this world where beautiful and terrible things happen and work to create more beautiful things. Let us work together relentlessly fighting for others as God fights for us.

Becky Roushorne-Lau is a wife, mother and minister in Southwestern Ontario. This article originally appeared on her blog, Ministry to Motherhood, at presbyterianrecord.ca.

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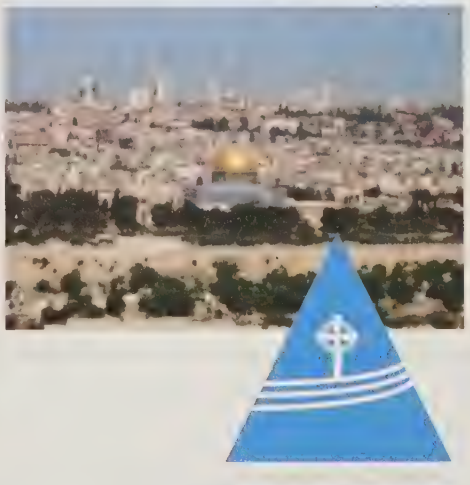

ISTOCK

VIEWPOINT

Planning Goodbyes

A husband and wife team on their experience of new burial rites.

By Kristine O'Brien and Patrick O'Brien

In ages past, every funeral included a shiny wooden casket, large flower arrangements and soft organ music playing in the background. For Christians in Canada—especially those in the Reformed tradition—they also included Psalm 23, the Lord's Prayer, and hymns like *Abide With Me*. Everyone wore black and knew exactly what to expect: a visit to the funeral home to greet the family, followed by a worship service the next day. There was always a minister in a clerical collar and a reception with sandwiches and squares made by the women's group at the church.

Those practices have begun to change.

Now, in the Ontario suburb where we live, very few people identify themselves as religious. Some may claim a loose affiliation with a particular faith or a Christian denomination ("My mother grew up in Scotland and I think she was Presbyterian") but most are lost when it comes to planning their goodbyes. Many have little or no experience in attending funerals or religious ceremonies. One of the most common things a funeral director hears families ask is, "What do people usually do?" ›

While it is tempting to mock those who choose unusual ways to memorialize the ones they love, we are better off interpreting those spiritual leanings and the desire to celebrate life

We also notice that those attending funerals are different. We saw a young woman come to a funeral service wearing cut-off jeans and flip-flops. We were at a service that concluded with Creedence Clearwater Revival's, "Jeremiah was a bullfrog. He was a good friend of mine ..." We heard a man's cell phone ring in the middle of the service and then watched while he got up and left to take the call.

More alarming is the trend toward choosing to do nothing at all. An increasing number of families simply elect to have their beloved cremated or buried with no family gathering and no ritual of any kind. There is no obituary to alert friends and neighbours to the need for care and comfort, and there is no opportunity for the community to reflect on the solemn passage from life to death. And yes, what you've heard is true: despite their best efforts, funeral homes are sometimes left with unclaimed cremated remains that families seem to have forgotten.

Within the church we lament that our traditions are being eroded. We can no longer rely on "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," to provide simple comfort. And yet we know that funerals invite the community to gather in a way that provides comfort to the grief-stricken. They allow a minister to publically speak words of hope. They provide an opportunity to weep, remember and pray together, deepening relationships and strengthening social bonds. They insist that we face the brevity of life and invite us to live with purpose and reverence.

Since this is what we believe, it makes sense that we are disappointed when families choose to host happy hour at the pub to celebrate dad's life, or want nothing more than a private scattering of ashes on Aunt Sheila's favourite beach. But we would be foolish to despair. In fact, if we are paying close attention, there is a deep yearning for ritual and spiritual comfort at the time of death.

We have met a large number of families who would like some kind of spiritual or religious leader to help them lead the funeral but are afraid of what that might mean. They ask the funeral director if there is someone "who isn't a Bible thumper." Some share stories of obnoxious or insensitive pastors, like the one who berated men for not crying enough, or the one who spoke the wrong name at the graveside. It is telling that often families thank the clergy person afterwards, remarking with relief, "That was much better than I expected." Perhaps we should not be surprised that some families now use celebrants—men and women trained in public speaking who will read poems or introduce eulogies but have no religious affiliation.

The funeral industry is shifting, too, in an attempt to respond to the different ways that people are seeking comfort. There is jewelry that can be marked with the fingerprint of a loved one and teddy bears with a tiny pocket that seals in a small portion of ashes. Cremated remains can even be made into diamonds.

Families are increasingly creative, whether or not they have any church memory. They set up displays of dad's trophies or grandpa's woodcarvings, or they bring in flowers from mom's garden. One family even brought a Harley Davidson motorcycle to be placed at the front of the chapel. Other families give away mementos, like at the funeral of a car lover where every guest was sent home with a small model car or the one where grandma's famous cookie recipe was distributed. All of them seem to be trying to find ways to communicate that their beloved was special, unique, important.

Even among families who claim that they aren't terribly religious, their created rituals speak of spiritual things. Lighting a candle in a dark time invites hope. Doves or butterflies released at the graveside speak of resurrection; so do stories of dragonflies and changing seasons. Echoes of baptism or communion are even present sometimes: one wife poured a cup of Tim Horton's coffee (double double!) on the urn before it was buried. Another family asked that glasses of Coke be passed out at the end of the service. Someone made a toast and everyone cried, "Cheers!"

This is where we see that the church has a vital role to play. While it is tempting to mock those who choose unusual ways to memorialize the ones they love, we are better off interpreting those spiritual leanings and the desire to celebrate life. We can help families to embrace meaningful rituals. We can share from our deep well of tradition. We can invite families to mourn in ways that are lasting, hopeful, and rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ—even if we've never done it that way before.

Rev. Kristine O'Brien is minister at Trafalgar, Oakville, Ont., and her husband, Patrick O'Brien works as a funeral director at Oakview Funeral Home.

ISTOCK

COMMUNITY

Caught Between Two Cultures

Second generation youth are seeking authenticity.

By Laura Heming

Second generation Canadians find the immigrant church they grew up in to be an institution that is out of touch, irrelevant and intolerant. "Second generations are overall yearning to connect more deeply in faith and spirituality—they are looking for genuineness—something more than the 'Kumbaya, everything is okay' mentality," explains Nam Soon Song.

Song, director of the Asian-Canadian Centre for Theology and Ministry out of Knox College, Toronto, sees this trend in the students at the college, as well as Asian-Canadian churches around Toronto.

She sees the negative image of the church institution as the result of a number of factors including the poor connection between second generation kids and their first generation parents, and the difficulties of living within the expectations of two cultures—a challenge the first generation may not have dealt with.

"In the Asian culture, family is very important," says Song. "Many kids want to please their parents. Usually parents have the most influence on their kid's faith. But perhaps parents need to see that the hard thing for the second generation is balancing how to be a part of the Canadian culture and still value things that their Asian culture requires."

The Asian-Canadian Centre held a seminar in September on "Religious Attitude and Commitment of 1.5 and Second Generation Asian-Canadian Protestant Young Adults." The seminar saw that one third of the students involved in the survey left church after high school, having little time after which to involve themselves in religious life. ›

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Religious life for second-generation young adults is a life they see as lacking in connectedness, diversity and inclusion of anyone other than the typical "church" person.

Joshua Chung is an 18-year-old young adult at St. Timothy's Korean, Toronto. As a lifelong churchgoer, he tends to see his devoted attendance as a means to satisfy his parents.

"I want to believe that church is a personal choice but I see it more as a reason to keep my parents happy," says Chung. "For me the idea of God and Jesus Christ is very metaphorical and not very tangible and physical. I guess it is this society that changes how people see things; everyone's a skeptic."

Chung does not see the church as a desirable place for himself or his peers, seeming to display no sort of connection to reality. He believes that the core factor that makes a church desirable is its community—the people within it.

"What I see is many of the teens are actually coming to church more for the community and social aspect. A lot of my friends don't even pay attention to the message the pastor is giving. Many teens my age are slowly drifting away from the church and mostly because the church isn't seen as something that is 'cool.' In an age where the mind is as open as it can be, religion is being frowned upon for its closed-mindedness."

Rev. In Kee Kim, senior minister at St. Timothy's, is aware of voices like Chung's, and also senses the pull from the young adults' parents.

"The young adults see the PCC as white and outdated," says Kim. "To them, the PCC culture has its own mentality. They seem to only come to church because of their parents, not because of any personal desire."

Originally founded as an immigrant church serving Koreans, St. Timothy's is now yearning to find a balanced relationship between first and second generations.

Kim speculates that the attitudes of second generations heavily reflect the church's tendency to offer little room for doubt and questioning. He believes churches need to create more room for young adults to grapple with the "big Christian truths." For a generation that values individual spirituality, organized religion typically seems to only bring unnecessary oppression.

"Christianity isn't effectively reaching out to modern people because our answer is always 'this is what the Bible says.' It quickly becomes black and white; it does not allow people to question and look at things differently.

"We need to look at what they need," continues Kim. "The second generation wants meaningful conversation. They have a desire to explore the truth on their own and they're searching for that. We often give them the final product rather than walking with them through it. In this pursuit, we have buried the teachings of Jesus. He came to teach us what life is; his teachings are for all who are searching, not just Christians. The church does not need an answer, but a direction."

The church can no longer hide the issues of the world away from these young adults at such a critical time. It is this "hear no evil, speak no evil" mentality that Nam Soon Song sees as a factor in putting young adults at an arm's length—a system with roots in church youth groups.

"Churches aren't allowing their youth to grapple with real issues, or get involved in the ministries of the church or outreach," she says. "This is the age when youth need to find more meaning in church. It should not be a place to let them have 'Christian fun,' but a time that should be used to prepare and sharpen. Youth groups need to stop treating their youth like children."

> 'Many teens my age are slowly drifting away from the church and mostly because the church isn't seen as something that is cool. In an age where the mind is as open as it can be, religion is being frowned upon for its closed-mindedness'

Immigrant churches may benefit from a reform if this is the case. In his article "Constructing a Local Theology for the Second Generation Korean Ministry," author Rev. Minho Song of YoungNak Presbyterian, Toronto, (affiliated with Korean Presbyterian Church Abroad, not the Presbyterian Church in Canada) addresses the need for ministry redevelopment in Korean churches.

"The present Korean church life is, somehow, no longer in tune with these young people, culturally and ideologically," he says. "Some pastors predict that at this rate of exodus the majority of the second generation Koreans will be unchurched in a few years, making them one of the most unreached peoples in our very neighbourhoods of North American cities."

Minho Song specifies reasons for the exodus as "too much emphasis on Korean ethnicity, the pull and power of postmodern culture, mass media and secular education, limitations on a sense of belonging, unclear vision of the church and church issues such as splitting and frequent changes in pastoral staff."

In response to these challenges, he points to three central ideologies that might assist immigrant churches in effectively and sustainably ministering to the young adult generation: The immigrant church must be ready to disciple younger members to take ownership of their faith, become ready to treat second generation attendees as contributing members of church life, and become willing to break free of ministry to solely ethnic groups.

"The church which looks forward to the contribution of the second generation must be built upon the strength of radical discipleship to Jesus, and not upon personal ties with the previous generation or ethnicity," says Song. "The second generation Koreans who hear the gospel need churches to be nurtured in. Unless the immigrant churches allow them more opportunities to assume leadership in the church, the church will force this group of people to become marginalized and ultimately unreached. And, churches bent on maintaining and protecting their own ethnicity will not earn the hearts of their succeeding generations."

When second generation young adults are given the space to grow at their own pace, they are able to thrive in a church family that not only encourages personal growth and discipleship, but also allows for genuineness, transparency and a recognition of the voice of a generation that has been drowned out by tradition and structure.

Laura Heming was the Record's *summer intern. She lives in Hamilton, Ont.*

DOCTRINE

산 믿음— Living Faith

The sharing of the good news of Christ at its best.

By Wally Hong

This past June, General Assembly accepted 산 믿음 (the Korean version of *Living Faith*) as one of the subordinate standards of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Translations allow us to reflect on the Canadian mosaic. They do not help us unite actively. After all, crossing those linguistic and cultural boundaries can only be done by those who are fluent, or done very awkwardly and sparsely only when special efforts are made. At best, we will be guests whenever we join each other's faith communities—which are defined by each one's own culture and language—and will only be able to share theological expressions through translations.

The whole church accepted that we (the entire membership of the PCC) are confessing our faith in Korean as confidently as we already do in English and French. We are saying that 산 믿음 is more than a translation (therefore, something we will only understand when translated to us in the language that we choose to speak) and that it is our normative confession. We are now bound by 산 믿음 as much as we are by *Living Faith*. We are declaring that we witness to the way that God builds us up for the future by bringing together many culturally, historically and linguistically diverse Christians in unity.

The unity in diversity in Christ expressed through the act of adding 산 믿음 as a subordinate standard is a precedent-setting event among all Christians. I know of no other Christian denomination that has come to the point of embracing a confessional statement as their own in a language that is so foreign to the majority.

At this point it is important to note that our work is not finished as we make 산 믿음 our subordinate standard. Much work is left to be done as we move toward confessing faith with languages of the First Nations in Canada as well as those who came from different linguistic backgrounds.

A small but important point that must be mentioned: 산 믿음 in its current form is Korean as spoken in Canada. This Korean is subtly different than Korean being used in Korea or elsewhere. It is uniquely Canadian Korean. We have done our best to preserve this Canadian character of Korean. Those who have worked on the document have been faithful in reflecting the usage of Korean by Canadian Presbyterians. By adopting 산 믿음, then, the PCC is confessing faith in Korean that is current.

Accepting that 산 믿음 is our standard and authoritative confession in the same way when we confess faith in *Living Faith* and *Foi Vivante* is to give credence to God's reign in which peoples from everywhere are united in Christ Jesus in a new way.

Rev. Wally Hong is minister at Drummond Hill, Niagara Falls, Ont.

ILLUSTRATION BY BARRY FALLS

Focus

Stories of mission, ministry and community

ISTOCK

MEDITATION

Drawing Closer to God

A few simple steps to deepen your relationship.

By Bonnie Thomson

The spirituality of the early church grew from Jesus' teachings in the context of Hebrew worship. For many centuries the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches were guardians of these practices. But in recent times they have been adopted and adapted by Christians of many traditions.

Here are a few simple exercises you can try. Keep in mind, though, that the value of these exercises is not in the practice itself, but in the preparation it provides for drawing close to God through Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Lectio divina—lexcio, Latin for "reading"—carries with it ›

MEDITATION, continued

the assumption that reading means listening.

When few books existed, written words were shared aloud with congregations, communities and families. *Lectio divina*, then, means reading God's written word in order to hear what God has to say through it. This happens by means of a four-step method.

LECTIO (reading) comes first and is often spoken aloud. This has the dual purpose of slowing the reader and giving the word more meaning by engaging lips, tongue, breath and ear. Since God is present in the word, it behoves us to approach our task of listening with faith, humility, openness and faithfulness. Then, by the power of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, we can receive the word which is read, several times, with pauses between each reading. Be open to receiving a word or phrase that will provide a focus for speaking and listening to God.

MEDITATIO (responding) involves thanking God for the "word" and, prayerfully considering what God means to communicate to you through that word. This is the time during which you may wish to journal your thoughts.

ORATIO (reflecting) is the time when, after having written or spoken your thoughts to God, you wait with the Holy Spirit, listen to and dialogue with God. Some people use this stage as a time to engage in centering prayer. Set a timer or alarm for marking the end of this stage. By comparing your thoughts at this time with your thoughts from the *meditatio* you will see changes, subtle or significant, which have come about while you were listening to God.

CONTEMPLATIO (resting) the final stage, is resting in God. It is the way we carry God to the world. You may also find that after you leave, the remembrance of your word provides a passageway for God to bring to your attention prayer concerns which become a spiritual counterpoint to your physical tasks.

CENTERING PRAYER (sometimes referred to as Christian meditation), can be part of the *lectio divina* or practised at other times, either individually or in a group.

Centering prayer in a group setting usually begins with a short invocation provided in writing and read aloud by all. This is followed by 20 minutes of silence. Next is a corporate prayer of intercession where individuals simply name those for whom they pray; after a name is spoken, the group repeats the name in unison. The prayer time ends with a benediction, read by everyone.

Twenty minutes of silence is not easy; the mind is not easily stilled. Participants are encouraged to be gentle with their mental wandering; to disengage from the distraction and quietly return to the word. When used outside of *lectio divina*, the word may be a name of God or a phrase such as "Come Lord" (*Maranatha*) or you can focus on your breathing.

THE JESUS PRAYER: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner" has been preserved by the Eastern Orthodox tradition where it is referred to as the prayer of the heart.

It is prayed repetitively as a means of turning one's thoughts and spirit toward God in order to experience the power of the divine name.

The Way of a Pilgrim, first published in Russia in 1881, is the story of a wandering pilgrim whose search for God was satisfied when he discovered the prayer of the heart. He began by reciting it, calmly, faithfully, 3,000 times a day. The following week the number was increased to 6,000. He continued this for a week and found that he missed it if he stopped praying even briefly. He then learned to say it 12,000 times a day and in the process discovered a transformed life, physically as well as spiritually.

Canadians who yearn to turn their lives more consistently toward God can use this same prayer as an alternative to radio or Bluetooth while driving, during wakeful hours of the night, when taking an elevator, vacuuming, or walking the dog. The possibilities for opening to God are endless.

Bonnie Thomson is a freelance writer. She worships at Malvern, Scarborough, Ont.

For Further Reading

The Heart of Silence: Contemplative Prayer by Those Who Practise It by Paul T. Harris (editor)

Praying the Scriptures: A Field Guide for Your Spiritual Journey by Evan B. Howard

Listening Prayer: Learning to Hear God's Voice and Keep a Prayer Journal by Leanne Payne

Lectio Divina: Renewing the Ancient Practice of Praying the Scriptures by Basil M. Pennington

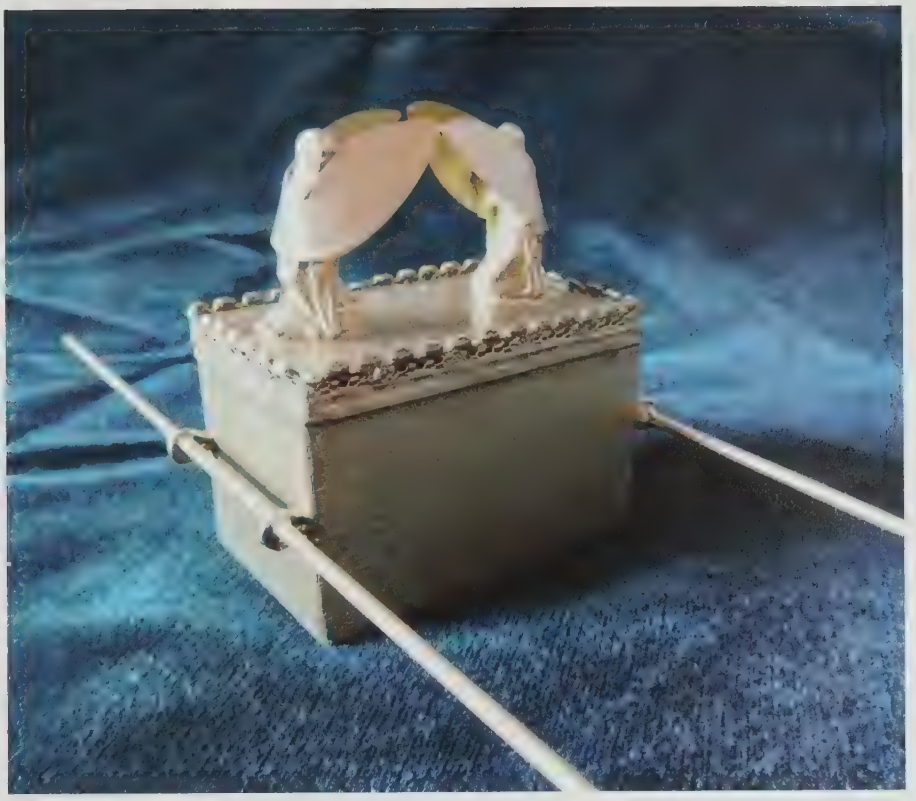


PHOTO BY JOHN WAMBOLDT

MINISTRY

Project Sanctuary

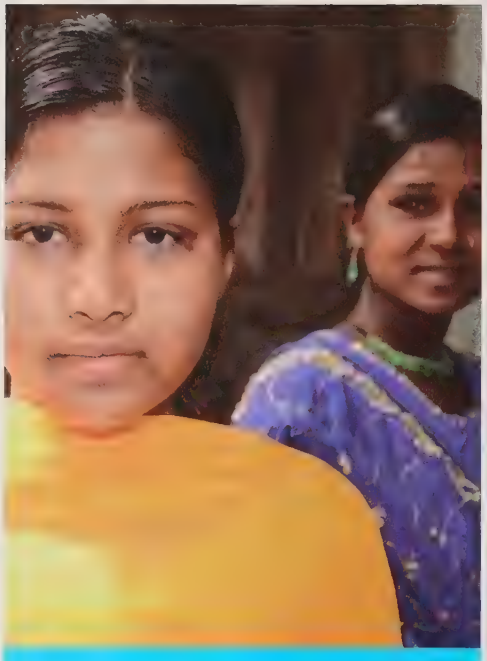
One man's passion. By John Wamboldt

As a teenage Christian in the 1960s, I realized early in my studies how important community is to my spiritual and social development. I knew I had to seek out other Christians whenever possible. Sometimes this meant travelling seven miles by bike to attend our weekly communion services.

I also learned that God's desire is to dwell among His people. In the Old Testament, this dwelling was the tabernacle, and many years later, the temple. When Jesus came to earth, one of the names given him was "Emmanuel—God with us" (Matthew 1:23).

The sanctuary, or tabernacle, was the portable worship building that the Israelites carried through the wilderness after leaving Egypt, about 3,500 years ago. It was the centre of unity for a diverse and bewildered people, who, a year before its inception had been slaves. I have studied the tabernacle for many years and have built several models.

A wonderful lesson I have learned from ›



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MINISTRY, continued

my studies is that "we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). When Israel trusted in God, He met all their needs. When they trusted in themselves, the result was failure and sin, such as the story of the golden calf (Exodus 32).

I RECEIVED A PHONE CALL from Montreal in the early '60s. It was my 14th birthday.

Norman Berry, a respected Plymouth Brethren Bible teacher, was on the line. His question was simple: "Would the Gospel Tent teenagers in Nova Scotia be interested in a project called Tabernacle Talks?" The Gospel Tent was an outreach by the Brethren in the Maritime provinces, and I was a part of it in the '60s. They held gospel meetings for both children and adults in a large tent.

Berry's idea was to study the tabernacle for a summer or two in the various Gospel Tent areas. We would spend the following two summers building a model. I agreed to contact teenagers throughout the province and they showed overwhelming enthusiasm.

We started our study of Exodus in July, five afternoons a week, and made detailed notes. I soon realized that the tabernacle is a living, vital organism, sacred in its significance, practical in its service—and it has special meaning for the Christian walk in the 21st century. As Christians, we learn from it the importance of community in our ministry of spiritual healing and social justice. Israel had just left Egypt, after many years of slavery. They were a downtrodden and bitter people, and needed the spiritual healing that only God can impart. The tabernacle provided a centre for their whole lives, including their spiritual, social and civil needs. When we know something of ancient Israel's struggles, it motivates us to be strong in God's work. We realize that in all phases of our lives, healing first of all originates with God. Only then can we have a ministry of spiritual help to others.

Since that phone call over half a century ago, I have continued studying and teaching the tabernacle to Sunday schools, teens and adults. I've built detailed models to use as teaching tools. When I taught the subject on a regular basis, each class was part of a series, dependent upon the previous lessons for continuity.

My main emphasis was always the spiritual meaning of the tabernacle, as explained and alluded to in other parts of the Bible. The common thing former pupils have told me over the years is that the lessons helped open up to them other scriptures (such as the Book of Hebrews) that they had trouble understanding. I'm currently working on a book on the subject, and am building another detailed model. The tentative title is *Project Sanctuary.*

This study is not for the faint-hearted! The treasures of God's word require our utmost attention. My prayer is that you will enter with me into the sanctuary and come away, as I have, with life-guiding principles for the Christian walk.

John Wamboldt is an elder at Saint David's, Halifax. In 2012, he retired from active duty on session and as superintendent of the Sunday school.

NEW BIRTH

Hope in the face of death. By David Sherbino

We all need to have hope, for without it life becomes unbearable and we are left with despair. Ben Patterson, in his book *The Grand Essentials,* tells the story about an S-4 submarine that was rammed off the coast of Massachusetts. It sank immediately. The entire crew was trapped in a prison house of death. Every effort was made to rescue the crew but all attempts failed. ›

ISTOCK

NEW BIRTH, continued

Near the end of the ordeal, a deep-sea diver, who was doing everything in his power to find a way for the crew's rescue, thought he heard a tapping in the steel wall of the sunken submarine. He placed his helmet up against the side of the vessel, and he realized it was Morse code. He attached himself to the side, and he spelled out in his mind the message being tapped from within. It was repeating the same question, "Is there any hope?"

Recently I had the opportunity to hear a lecture given by William Hauben, a Holocaust survivor. At the end of World War II when he was liberated from the Ebensee Concentration Camp, he completed studies for the cantorate at the Cantor's Institute of the College of Jewish Studies in Chicago. As I listened to his amazing story, I wondered how it was possible to not give up and lose hope of survival.

The secret of his survival was that Hauben believed God had a purpose for him. That purpose was to be a living witness; to tell the world of the atrocities that occurred so that this would never happen again to anyone, anywhere. That purpose gave him hope.

Much of what William Hauben said was similar to the famous physician Victor Frankel, also a Holocaust survivor. Frankel realized that when people lost hope they simply gave up and died. Hope not only enhanced life but gave people a totally different perspective.

So what is hope? American Presbyterian minister and author Lloyd Ogilvie suggests in his book, *The Greatest Counselor in the World*, "Human perceptions of what we hope for usually involves wishful thinking. We have all wished for ourselves, for other people and for the future. These wishes are the result of our human desires, what we have evaluated would be best for us and others, or for some situation."

As one who has been a lifelong fan of the Maple Leafs, I begin each season saying, "I hope they win the cup this year." I hope they will, but in reality I don't think it will happen. In this instance I am simply trying to be optimistic.

When people discover they have a terminal illness, there is a type of hope that is changing and somewhat limited

A biblical understanding of hope is quite different. It is a gift God gives to us. No matter the circumstances I am facing, I can have hope, because I believe that God is sovereign over every situation that happens in life and that God is faithful to His promises. Therefore I choose to trust Him for everything in life, because I know His desire for each person is that which is good.

Years ago God spoke to the prophet Jeremiah words of promise and hope: "For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11).

At this time the people were living in exile in Babylon. Since they longed to go home, some prophets tried to give them hope, but it was false hope, telling the people they would soon return to their land. God spoke to Jeremiah and told him to tell the people they were not going home but would remain in exile for 70 years. In the meantime they were to settle down, build houses, plant gardens, get married, and have children. When the 70 years were completed, the Lord would return them to their land. The promise of "plans to prosper you ... to give you hope and a future" would be fulfilled, but according to the sovereign plan of God. Would they trust God?

The apostle Paul faced many situations that could cause people to despair. When he went through suffering and hardship, facing the possibility of death, he chose to focus on the power and presence of Almighty God. Later he would write: "We do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

When people discover they have a terminal illness, there is a type of hope that is changing and somewhat limited. Psychologist Theresa Rando writes in *Grief, Dying and Death*: "Initially the hope is that the diagnosis will be proven incorrect. This changes upon confirmation of the diagnosis, to hope that there will be a cure or some miracle that will enable the patient to escape death. Later this hope is transformed to a smaller scale and the patient hopes that life will be optimal albeit limited."

We can understand this approach to hope, but if we are honest it is fleeting and in the end there is death. Although we recognize death will happen to everyone, how is it that some people are able to die with the assurance that death does not have the final word? Ultimately our hope is not focused on

getting better, but on aligning our life with God's purposes. We live in a world where suffering and death is a reality, but God does not intend this to drive us away but to draw us closer.

The apostle Peter refers to this as living hope. He states, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:3-4). As difficult as it is when one is facing death, we know that this is not the end of our story. Our ultimate hope is that one day we will be with God.

Author Charles Swindoll writes in *Hope Again*, "Who can mind the journey when the road leads home ... So if you want to smile through your tears, if you want to rejoice through times of suffering, just keep reminding yourself that as a Christian, what you are going through isn't the end of the story ... it is simply the rough road that leads to the right destination."

This ultimate hope is based on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. If God brought His Son back from the dead, we can have confidence that God will be able to bring us through any situation we are facing.

When it comes time for us to face our death, we realize that not even death can separate us from God. In this issue of the *Record*, Tony Plomp affirms his hope in the words of the Heidelberg Catechism: "My only comfort in life and death ... is that I am not my own but belong body and soul to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ."

The greatest assurance we can have in life is that we belong to God. The apostle Paul wrote, "If we live we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord" (Romans 14:8). So if you are fearful about life and what it holds for you, remember God will keep you. He called you to be His and He will never let go.

J.I. Packer reminds us in *Knowing God*, "What matters supremely, therefore, is not, in the last analysis, the fact that I know God, but the larger fact which underlies it—that he knows me. I am graven on the palms of his hands. I am never out of his mind ... I know him because he first knew me and continues to know me. He knows me as a friend, one who loves me; and there is no moment when his eye is off me, or his attention distracted from me, and no moment, therefore when his care falters. This is momentous knowledge. There is unspeakable comfort ... in knowing that God is constantly taking knowledge of me and watching over me for my good."

So as we look at life we realize that what is important is not what we have acquired or accomplished, but the relationship we have with God and that one day we will share in the glory of God. St. John wrote, "Now we are the children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

Imagine that! One day we shall see God face to face. That is our hope.

This article has been adapted from Living, Dying, Living Forever: Spiritual Reflections on the Journey of Life. *Rev. Dr. David Sherbino is professor of pastoral ministries and spiritual formation at Tyndale Seminary, Toronto, and preaching pastor at Paris, Ont.*

The BEGINNING of LIFE

A meditation on having stage four cancer.

By Tony Plomp. Illustration by Marie Lefrance.

Sometimes you get a premonition that things are not quite right.

For many months last year I felt physically drained and the joy of my post-retirement ministry as a pastoral visitor in a Vancouver congregation had begun to dim. Everything seemed just too much.

And so began two months of visits to doctors and specialists, and examinations by a variety of high-tech medical machines. I suspected the worst but tried to suppress it. And then the lung specialist delivered his verdict. He was kind and gentle but could not avoid delivering bad news. I had cancer of the lung. Not only that, I also had cancer in my bones. At the time I did not realize that I had just heard someone pronounce a death sentence over me. If you have one cancer there is hope. If the cancer has spread into Stage Four—abandon hope because your time on earth is extremely limited.

As the doctor spoke to my wife and me, the words of William Willimon, that great teacher of preachers, jumped into my consciousness. He had spoken about the nature of faith and said something to the effect of, "If it (faith) doesn't 'play' in the cancer ward, it is not worth much." So here was my test. I had by now been a minister of the gospel for more than 50 years. I had been with people who faced situations like my own. Could I now practise what I had preached? ›

An amazing calm came over me. As we left the specialist's office I thanked him and told him that we were people of faith and that our faith in God would be the source of our strength for whatever was to come.

It was hard to share all this, of course, with our two children and our four grandchildren, the latter being old enough to understand to some degree what all this meant for Opa.

The question had come up in conversation with the lung specialist: should I avail myself of radiation and/or chemotherapy? I had seen the results of those treatments in the bodies of others and had decided, "No, thank you. Let me make final arrangements and avoid the pain, nausea and general misery of this therapeutic treatment."

The kindly specialist thought differently and looked at me and said, "Well, you are otherwise strong and in good health. Besides, you can always stop at any time."

And so with the encouragement of family I am now cared for at the Richmond Cancer Clinic on an outpatient basis.

The chemotherapy resulted in unpleasant side effects, and I came to realize that palliative radiation was even more of a burden after I had one treatment at the Vancouver Cancer Clinic. However, at time of writing (July), I am holding on. I was especially encouraged that after two chemo treatments the oncologist decided that I could do without the next one. This pattern repeated itself now three times so that the next treatment is a month away!

WE LIKE TO THINK WE CAN HANDLE DIRE SITUATIONS with a stiff upper lip. Well, I haven't. There have been tears. After what I thought was a calm acceptance of my fate, tears would suddenly well up when I thought about my wife and family, my friends, the potential travails of the final episode of my life. And with the psalmist I groaned aloud. A colleague assured me this was a normal reaction since his father, also dying of cancer, wept at least five times in each half-hour telephone conversation they had together.

There are times I feel resentful. There were so many things I still had wanted to do both for the church locally as well as nationally and to enjoy whatever remaining years would be left for my beloved wife and me to indulge in leisure activities and to watch our cherished grandchildren grow up.

Over the years, a number of folk have told me as they faced my situation, "I have no regrets." That is no doubt how they feel but Christians especially should avoid making such an arrogant statement. To have no regrets means you believe you have lived a sinless life. I cannot claim that and no Christian can do so. I have regrets aplenty. Only Christ was the sinless one. This is not meant to be a confessional but truth to tell, we cannot live on this earth without failing to live up to our high calling as disciples of Christ. As scripture so wisely points out, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Our joy is not that we have conquered all temptations and never failed, but that we have sinned yet stand in the cleansing showers of God's grace and are embraced by a love that will not let us go.

I look back and thank God for all the ways God has led me—through the latter part of the Second World War when at age seven I, together with my somewhat older sisters, was sent from the city of Rotterdam to a farm in the middle of the country, an event that most surely saved my life since I had begun to suffer the consequences of malnutrition and no nutrition! And then, the trauma of emigration from the Netherlands to Canada at age 13 and wondering what would become of me in this new country. Well, it is too long a story to tell but now I can say with even more conviction than ever that God's hand was in whatever happened to me in all the years leading up to this time and the journey soon to be accomplished. We do not walk alone. There is one beside us to guide and to bless. No, the problems, difficulties, challenges, pain and grief will not disappear during our days on earth but when we place our trust in

After what I thought was a calm acceptance of my fate, tears would suddenly well up when I thought about my wife and family, my friends, the potential travails of the final episode of my life

God, truly exercising faith, we will eventually be able to say, "He does all things well."

I have not reached this conclusion easily. It would take more than a book to detail my faith journey. I grew up in a Dutch Calvinist home in which the intellect was honoured as a Holy Spirit-inspired tool to perceive God's Word and God's will for our lives. One was not encouraged to engage in "enthusiasms," to dwell on personal experiences of God in the Pentecostal manner. There was a deep conviction that God had chosen us for God's work and that we could be assured of our salvation as we lived out our Christian vocation.

Tony Plomp with his wife, Margaret and two of their four grandchildren.

AND YET FAITH and our faith journey are complex. I remember walking home from a meeting of the Air Cadets when I was in my early teens. We had moved to Canada only a few years back from the bustling, orderly, renewing city of Rotterdam to the rough-hewn town of Haney, B.C. Life had not been easy. I worried about the future, my family's and my own. The night was dark and drizzly. As I rounded the corner from the main thoroughfare into the silence and utter darkness of the road on which we lived—called "Lover's Lane" due to the immense trees that stood watch on both sides of the pavement—a strange calm descended upon me, a kind of warmth of assurance that all would be well. It was so unsuspected, so out of the ordinary, so not something "me," that I could only conclude that this was the Lord's doing. It marked me. I then knew that I was "His" and that God was more than an intellectual construct.

My life moved on through further studies at university and Knox College, Toronto, student mission fields, and marriage and then ordination. I rejoiced in life with Margaret and ministry in my first congregation, Goforth, Saskatoon.

After almost five years, we moved by call to Richmond Presbyterian, a congregation I had founded as a student in the late 1950s. And here I flourished in building the church. How I loved the work. How I loved preaching. But sometimes I wondered if my love of preaching and the work of the church had become idolatrous, that I spoke all the right words and did all the "right" things but that my personal relationship with Lord had faded into the background. Jesus, I recalled, had something to say about this.

And, yes, I have rebelled against the Lord when I faced unimaginable tragedies in peoples' lives; where I stood by helpless because all I could do was to listen and pray. Who of us has not wrestled with the question both the world and faith ask: Why? Why the pain and heartache that draws so close when we survey the world's agonies nearby and far away? Where is God in all of this? I do not reject the sincere atheist and true seeker who cannot embrace the faith.

Yet somehow the Lord has not let me go. Finally, for me, it comes down to Peter's answer to Jesus when our Lord, after many of his followers left him, asked, "Will you also go away?" And Peter answered, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

In a personal note to me someone wrote: "The subtleties of our faith are always in flux ... sometimes we see darkly, then briefly we see clearly ... the texture of our relationship with God shifts, is intellectual this moment, is tactile at another." I have found this to be so. ›

I do not know what shape the immediate and long-term future will take. What does it mean to die? What does it mean to confess, "I believe in the resurrection of the dead?" What does it mean to embrace the Christian hope of life eternal? Some folk have told me they know exactly what that future will be like based on their reading of scripture. I confess that I do not know. It is a mystery as deep and profound as is the mystery of faith and the God in whom we place our trust. All I know is that God is at the centre of that mystery and so here, too, I confess that I believe "He does all things well."

In an address to the General Assembly I quoted a part of the first question and answer of the Heidelberg Catechism. "What is your only comfort (strength) in life and in death?" The answer: "My only comfort in life and in death is that I belong, body and soul, to my faithful saviour Jesus Christ." We belong to God. We belong to each other. We belong to "all the saints who from their labours rest" (*Book of Praise* #611). And so in faith I will enter into the mystery of that new and boundless life that God has prepared for all God's people and of which, by God's grace, we may receive a foretaste even now—just as I did on that dark and dreary night when I experienced the beauty of the Lord and knew a peace that passes understanding.

As I said, I have many regrets. Yet one thing I do not regret: having placed my faith in God and Jesus Christ whom God has sent, the one in whom we find peace, hope, joy and love.

When Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor and leader of the Confessing Church in Germany during the Nazi period, was led away to be executed he is reported to have said, "This is the end. For me the beginning of Life."

May such be also our conviction when our time comes to enter into the full glory of the love of God.

Rev. Dr. Tony Plomp is a retired minister and a deputy clerk of the General Assembly. He lives in Richmond, B.C.

The Long Goodbye

As we live longer, we also die over a longer period of time.

By Andrew Faiz

As he was approaching his retirement age, my father was diagnosed with a form of Parkinson's; he died short of his 70th birthday. Those were seven years in slow motion; intense, emotional, lost, watching this once proud man empty from the inside, his mind active, his motor control disintegrating till there was nothing but a body shell, the only sign of the father I knew in his eyes. In a different part of the world, in an earlier age, my father would have died sooner. He would not have had the pills and potions and fancy machines to keep him alive.

Was that Dad the last six months, or even the last two years? I don't know. He died before I turned 30; by 35 I was grown up enough to appreciate having that wise sensei in my life. But the father I longed for and loved was no longer accessible within the body that remained. Medical miracles kept him alive but my father died well before his body breathed its last.

Would it have been better for him, and for us his family, and for society at large, if the body had seized a year

earlier? I don't know; and I feel like a rotten son asking that question, but I want my child to ask that question seriously when facing my declining days.

IN A DECADE, a quarter of Canadians will be over 65 years of age. A tenth, in their 80s.

We are living longer. Over the course of 50 years, the average lifespan has increased in Canada by a decade—from 71 to 81 years. (That statistic alone sounds like a miracle.) We live at the apex of human experience—a high standard of living, a medical safety net, unfathomable distribution of wealth for the vast majority across the nation, and myriad choices and options in every stage and development of our life. It is remarkable, really. And now we get to live that much longer to enjoy all these blessings. And many of us are genetically blessed to do just that.

But ... a longer life is not necessarily a better life. There has been a steady increase over the past two decades, and which will continue to increase, of a wide variety of age related conditions—dementia and Alzheimer's and others to do with brain functions, including motor skills; osteoporosis, arthritis and more bone related; ear and eye and teeth related; deterioration of organs; and much more, including various cancers. We may live longer, but for some those extra years are going to be interminable.

Society is struggling to find ways to deal with this slow but inevitable process to death: Assisted death, the nursing home industry, extended retirement regulations, the complicated business of financial management, estate planning and other legal procedures, geriatric medical complexes and that messy business of the perfect pill that cures all ills, are just some of the piecemeal approaches.

A tsunami of change and we're struggling as society, and as church, to keep pace. Longevity has replaced faith. If only we could pray with the same devotion we bring to managing that diverse cocktail which keeps the various organs working. But then the cocktail has corporeal results. For a while.

Folks rise from strokes daily; getting dialysis a couple times a week is commonplace. All these possibilities redefine "life." Heart attacks are no longer instant killers; a bypass or two or four, a stent here and there, along with some blood thinners, physiotherapy and diet and you can tick for decades. For many in their 50s, the heart attack is the spur to major life changes. You may be one of them: 30, 40 pounds overweight at 47, lean at 54 as you ponder your mortality on a steady diet of meat and greens.

So ... is there theology in the Do Not Resuscitate order?

WE ARE CHALLENGED IN THE CHURCH to think about this. We are promised grace during mortal existence which most of us (speaking personally) waste; and we are promised life after death, which it seems to me many of us don't really have confidence in. The sting of death is everywhere—in magical retirement plans, in travel fantasies, in massive adult colonies built at the edges of golf courses and with weekly wine tastings, in infantile youthification of our senior years.

Does "honour your mother and father" mean bringing the kids to the nursing home to visit dementia Dad daily, weekly, monthly? Or does it mean having grandma who doesn't know who she is or where she is living in the spare bedroom in the basement?

I don't have an answer to these questions, and chances are neither do you. There is discussion in some denominations, which falls into two very broad categories: The monochromatic biblical treatment, of course, with its declaration of absolutes. Or, the fiddly game of ethical inches, the stuff of messy public policy. Neither approach is ultimately helpful, emotionally honest or satisfying, because in either case it is more about finding a solution than it is about prayerful consideration.

Church to date has been acutely affected by the ageing society—as under-40s seek out different spiritual communities, the over-60s cling to bricks and mortar. In most of our congregations, older, financially secure members dominate. While this keeps the congregation alive, it doesn't always keep it vibrant. That's a fine balance. We need to talk about that. About how older generations, now living a decade longer than they used to, are crowding out younger generations; who in turn are not really lining up for Sunday worship to gain their membership cards.

We have grace, we have redemption, we have the promise of a fantastic afterlife. Hebrews 6:19 reminds us, "We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain." We need to believe that. We need to be strong and courageous, as we age, slowly.

Andrew Faiz is the Record*'s senior editor.*

FROM THE MODERATOR

Thinking Like a Rabbit

It's time to shift our paradigm. By Karen Horst

The writer of Hebrews 12:1 declares that we are to run the race set before us. The challenge is that there are different ways to run. Have you ever spent time thinking about the different gifts required in running a sprint versus a marathon? A marathon requires steadiness, the pacing of energy, patience and tenacity. A sprint requires intensity, devotion in the moment and a willingness to push way beyond the limits for a short time. You remember the story of the race between the tortoise and the rabbit? Remember who wins? This was a story written in a time when the great majority were marathon thinkers. The tortoise wins because he is steady and constant. If it were written today, the rabbit would win.

Our culture has gone through a radical shift. Most people are not like tortoises but rabbits. A practical insight I have gained from the work of Dr. Kennon Callahan is that the majority of people in our culture are now sprinters. Rather than sign up for committees and institutional needs, people now agree to work on specific areas of passion and interest. They work hard. They work intensely and they get the job done. The challenge for us is to redesign our local structures to accommodate this paradigm shift.

When I was a teen, I wanted to direct the Christmas church school pageant. In all humility, I had great ideas but before I knew it, I was signed up for the Christian Education team and ended up planning the church school and nursery and March Break activities. It was not my interest at the time to do all those things but it was the only way I could get to my goal of doing the pageant. Today, I would be welcomed to coordinate the pageant and then be done and appreciated—*if* I am participating in a congregation that understands the marathoner/sprinter dynamic.

Rather than sign up for committees and institutional needs, people now agree to work on specific areas of passion and interest

Do not hear me wrong. Marathon work is essential and valued in every congregation. Committees are often the way that we do long-term planning but if that is all we are offering for volunteers in the congregation, then many capable people will not sign up. Too often, we will quickly accuse them of not being interested or committed enough when all the while the reality is that we may not understand yet how they volunteer and what motivates them to sign up for activities.

What study and volunteer opportunities do you offer for people in your congregation? Are there chances to sign up for a one-time job and then be done? Are all your Bible studies long-term or do you offer some that last for one day or for three sessions? Do you offer one-time events for families? Is there the chance to do a specific mission project or is it all about achieving your annual budget? Does your budget provide projects that people can have fun achieving? Do you permit two or three people with a deep passion to run with an idea or do they get supervised according to the ways you have always done them before? Are you inclined to ask volunteers to serve coffee or lunches only if they are a part of a group? Do you offer programming for when the intended audience is available rather than what is convenient for you?

Read Dr. Kennon Callahan's book entitled, *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church* for a far more comprehensive understanding of this shift in culture. Experiment with one-time and short-term experiences. For a future generation, you cannot do anything else.

Rev. Karen Horst is minister at St. Andrew's, Orillia, Ont.

WESLEY BATES/3INABOX

People & Places

Find more online at presbyterianrecord.ca

Photographs can be uploaded at presbyterianrecord.ca.

ST. ANDREW'S, BRAMPTON, ONT.
On June 15, four members from St. Andrew's drove to Stratford to deliver about 100 lbs of underwear, school supplies and a donation to Change Her World. The charity's Vice-Chair Carol Hamilton (left) and Chair Linda Willis (second from left) received the items, which will be shipped to Malawi where the group supports over 30 schools. Standing are Susan Jess and Sandra Jackson and kneeling in front are Joyce Wagg and Felicity Alexander.

ST. ANDREW'S, GUELPH, ONT.
Happy 100th birthday, John Pearce! John came to Ontario from Northern Ireland in 1957 with his wife and two daughters, and has been a vital part of the lives of three Presbyterian congregations. He served as Sunday school superintendent and clerk of session at Rockwood. Then in 1980, when he and his wife retired, they moved to Knox, Goderich. And in 1991 they relocated to Guelph and signed on at St. Andrew's.

ST. JOHN'S, BELFAST, P.E.I.
Ann McColl has been a member of St. John's for 80 years. Wow! Here Rev. Roger MacPhee presents her with a gift—a devotional book in honour of her devotion to the congregation.

THE OTHER SIX DAYS

Candy, Clothes and Music

Everything you need to be a good Christian. By Bradley Childs

CLOTHING

RedBubble has got good stuff and offensive stuff. It's big, so you have to search around a bit. They sell clothes—odd clothes. Personally, I love a good T-shirt with a picture of a sloth on it riding a tortoise. Who doesn't? A nice black V-neck with "talk nerdy to me" in bold white letters would make a perfect gift for my friend Andrea. Maybe you need a T-shirt of Jesus riding a dinosaur and firing laser guns or coming out of the old Ghostbusters sign this Easter? Or if you're a Futurama fan, perhaps a Dr. Zoidberg Jesus might appeal to you. It's a tad off-putting I'm sure, but they also have one with Jesus shooting Charles Darwin from the movie *Paul*. Apparently there is a whole world of fanboy/nerd stuff out there just for Christians. Who knew?

FIND IT @ **redbubble.com.**

The God Jesus Robot, as seen on YouTube.

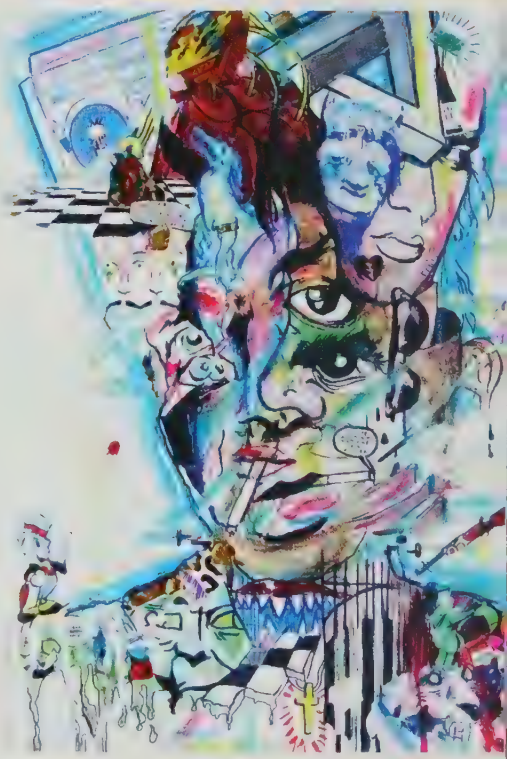
MUSIC

Abandon Kansas is a trio alt-rock band from Wichita, Kansas; not far from where I grew up. I really enjoyed *Turn it to Gold* when it came out a couple of years ago. Lucky for us, they put out a new album just this summer titled *Alligator*. I'm not sure if it's more grown up or just less polished and more grunge. Either way it works. Sample on the website or buy it on iTunes.

FIND IT @ **shop.badchristian.com/collections/abandon-kansas**

VIDEO: THE GOD JESUS ROBOT?

I need somebody who speaks Japanese to explain this one to me. So what is it? It's a commercial for a small blue and white ('80s?) robot from Japan that carries a cross, moves back and forth, nods its head and has red flashing eyes. From what I can discern, it seems to be like one of those old magic 8-balls that answers questions. To be honest the ad is crazy, and makes no sense to me in any way. So of course, the first



Abandon Kansas, "Alligator."

thought that came to my mind was, "I gotta put that in the *Record*!" If anybody knows anything about this crazy thing, please, please share and if anybody gets my name in the Christmas white elephant draw then know this... I'm saving a very special space on my Silly Christian Kitsch Shelf just for this little guy.

FIND IT @ youtube.com. Search for "4 God Jesus Robot."

CHRISTIAN CANDY

Have you ever thought to yourself, "Man, I love Jesus but I also love candy. I wonder if anybody sells Jesus candy?" Well wonder to yourself no more! The good people over at Scripture Candy sell tons of it. Granted, the Jesus Easter Promise Seeds just look like pastel-coloured candy corn but still, it might be kind of a cool thing to give the Sunday school kids "Happy Birthday, Jesus" lollipops or suckers with a tiny Bible verse printed on the wrapper. Brian Adkins of Alabama came up with this little company and it's not a bad idea. Someone handed me one of those old Bible tracts the other day. I must say, I'd have been a lot happier about it if it were loaded with sugar.

FIND IT @ scripturecandy.com.

Rev. Bradley Childs is minister at First, Regina.

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Synod of Quebec and Eastern Ontario

No vacancies at this time.

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Amherst Island, St. Paul's: Half-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Karen Bach; 613-353-1033; karen.bach@utoronto.ca; stpaulsamherstisland.com.

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Final Thoughts

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obituaries

MacRae, Rev. Dr. Murdock James, was born October 13, 1938 and passed away August 14, 2015 surrounded by treasured family and friends. Murdock went to that "land that is fairer than day."

Born in Wreck Cove, N.S., he was the son of Frank and Margaret Catherine (MacDermid) MacRae and was predeceased by brothers Ian MacDermid, Ian Kerr MacRae and sister-in-law Marge MacRae.

He and his wife of 52 years, Ruth, were blessed with three children: Martin (Angela), Bryce (Elise) and Kimberly (Mike); grandchildren Jacob, Noah and Elijah, Devin, Tristan and Owen; great-grandchildren Madison and Kaleb; and a treasured son-in-law Mike Fahie. He is also survived by his brother Sandy (Sarah), North River.

Murdock, a graduate from Acadia University and the Presbyterian College in Montreal dedicated his entire 46 years of ministry to the Presbytery of Cape Breton. He was instrumental in establishing the Northside Community Guest Home, the North Sydney Food Bank, the Boys' Brigade (North Sydney and Boularderie) and in the growth of Camp MacLeod.

He lived, he loved, he laughed, he laboured.

Veenstra, Rev. Jeff, died on May 2, 2015 surrounded by his family: wife Diana, son Justin and daughters Jackie, Melissa and Rachael. A service of thanksgiving and celebration of his life was held at the Church of St. Andrew & St. Paul on May 9 where Jeff was the minister for the last five years.

Jeff had a passion for spreading God's love to the world and sharing God's word with all. He will always be remembered for his gift for preaching and the wonderful presence he had in the pulpit. His ministries included Creemore, Ont. (a four-point charge), Knox Dunnville, Ont., St. Andrew's Hespeler, Cambridge, Ont., and St. Andrew & St. Paul, Montreal, Que.

Jeff was a very strong supporter of PWS&D, serving on the national committee and taking every chance he could to promote its work. He had the opportunity to see it first-hand during a mission trip to Africa in 2005. He treasured his many friendships and during his short time with cancer, realized both how many friends he had and how many lives he had touched. He felt truly blessed by the love that was shown to him during his final months.

All those who were touched by Jeff rejoice at the gift of his life and ministry. He will be missed.

FOR THE JOURNEY

Lesson from a Birdfeeder

In awe of the great defender. By David Webber

"I wonder why we don't see that little hawk feeding at our birdfeeders anymore?" Linda was standing at the kitchen window and pondering out loud as she watched the sparrows, redpolls, nuthatches and sundry other small birds bounce busily between birdfeeders on our deck.

"Do you mean the kestrel or the merlin?" I asked.

"Well I haven't seen either of them for a good long time," said Linda. "They used to come swooping down and snatch a sparrow or redpoll quite regularly. It used to make me wonder if we were feeding the dickybirds or the sparrow-hawks."

It was true. For years we had regular visits to our birdfeeders by the merlin and kestrel, two pint-sized but fierce falcons that are about half the size of a large crow. And then a couple of years ago the visits just seemed to stop. We had seen both species perching on power poles within a half-mile of our place so we knew they were still around, apparently just not dining at Chez Webber.

And then just a few days later—"Well, I guess that answers that," Linda said. "Did you ever see anything like it?"

"I can't believe my eyes," I said. "That male merlin streaked in like a blue thunderbolt looking to snatch a sparrow but he was cut right off in mid-snatch by that moth-eaten old crow. And look, the old crow is still giving chase."

Linda and I both stood there gawking. One of the three scruffy old crows that Linda regularly fed bread from a platform adjacent to the birdfeeders was flying for all he was worth after the blue-grey sleek and agile male merlin. The old crow chased the merlin halfway across the lake and was soon joined in the chase by his two disheveled buddies.

"I guess we haven't seen many merlins or kestrels dining at our place ever since you became the Crow Lady of Lac La Hache and took to feeding crows," I said to Linda. "Those crows are not just bedraggled beggars, they are the benevolent bouncers of the bird bar."

Linda frowned at my lame attempt at alliteration. "Just another lesson from the birdfeeder," she said.

Linda's comment got me to thinking. The three crows that hang out at our place seem to peacefully coexist with all the other hangers-on at the birdfeeders. They feed from their platform within a couple of feet of the other birdfeeders and never seem to have any issues with anyone, including the larger birds like the pileated woodpecker and the flicker who come in to chew the fat from time to time. From the diminutive nuthatch to the peaceful pine grosbeaks to the more aggressive cedar waxwings and redwing blackbirds, the three crows just seem to bop about getting along with everybody. And yet, one little killer bird shows up and the three crows become as aggressive as all get out.

It's not that the pocket falcons would try to take a crow—at only half their size I'm sure they wouldn't—but the crows just seem to know they are deadly characters for just about everybody else and so they take a stand. It's like they are acting on behalf of all nuthatches, sparrows and chickadees who wouldn't stand a chance with a merlin or a kestrel. It's almost like the crows identify with the more diminutive birds they daily hang out with and they are willing to lay it ›

ILLUSTRATION: BARRY FALLS

on the line for them. At least that's the way it appears around our birdfeeders.

Of course no one really knows what actually goes on in a crow's head. People who study crows hold that they are extremely intelligent, even as intelligent as some species with opposable thumbs. But whatever is going on, their apparent advocacy at our birdfeeder as they champion for other birds makes me think.

It makes me think about my own dickybird existence, about how so many times in life I need someone to champion for me, someone to advocate for me, someone to fight for me. Oh yes, I can puff up my feathers and make my dickybird-self larger than life with the best of them. But there are many times in my life that my lame attempts at self-defence do not count for much. Perhaps it is something that streaks into my life completely knocking me off my pins. Sometimes it is the very real and agonizing "dark night of the soul" that entangles me. Sometimes it is sin that snares me and chokes me like death. Sometimes it is a nagging fear that overpowers, stealing peace from me. I don't need to elaborate more than this because I expect that if you are reading this you know pretty much what I am talking about; the discomfort and at times the sheer terror of it, too.

The Bible seems to take my dickybird experiences very seriously. Over and over God is presented as defender, protector, and advocate for His people. The Bible uses powerful words and word pictures to make the point. At times it is as the commander of an army of angels on our behalf (Psalm 91:11); at times it is as a protecting shepherd (Psalm 23); at times it is as the friend who lays down his life (John 15:13); at times it is as an advocate before the judgement seat (1 John 2:1); at times it is as the one who loves perfectly and banishes all fear (1 John 4:18). Whatever the words or the metaphors used in numerous places in the Bible, they all point to a single truth: that God knows that I am in need of protecting and defending and that He is the one true God amenable, able and capable to do that in all circumstances.

One of my first profound experiences of this was before I came to Christ. I was in my early 20s and laying in a hospital late at night awaiting major surgery the following morning. Somehow I got caught between the personal conflict going on between my surgeon and the only other surgeon in the small Alberta town who was to assist in the operation. I had two visits that night, one from each surgeon, one saying I absolutely had to have the operation and the other saying it was putting my life at risk for no reason. I was left absolutely terrified and frantic. I phoned home in tears. Linda told me to look in my night bag, that she had put her little pocket Bible there, that I should get it out and read it. After she tried to console me over the phone to no avail, in desperation I dug into the night bag and found the small red Gideon's pocket Bible there. I had no idea where to turn to read but somehow I ended up opening it at Psalm 121. I lay on my hospital bed, read it, recited it repeatedly and received an amazing and powerful peace that seemed to fall on me like a warm blanket. Though I didn't know it at the time, I became a believer in Jesus that night.

Rev. David Webber is retired from the Cariboo Presbyterian Church, B.C. His fourth book, When the Aspen Flowers *can be ordered through webberink@telus.net.*

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Each year, the *Record* fills its Christmas issue with artwork from readers of all ages, and one winning entry appears on the front cover. This year, will it be yours?

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Please be sure to include your name, the church you attend, and your age (if you'd like to share it) in the email or on the back of your artwork.

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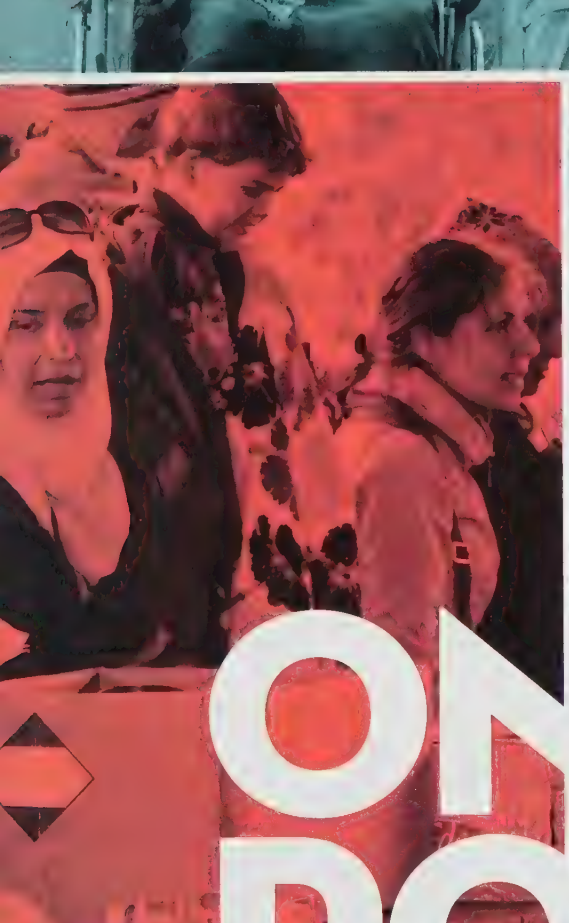

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FOR THE RECORD

Carrying Heartache and Hope

Vulnerable refugees deserve a share of our blessings.

By David Harris

It's hard to imagine anyone not wanting Canada to help out in the current worldwide refugee crisis. But despite the many positive responses I've heard about, including from the Christian community, I've also heard about some naysaying. So what's going on?

First of all, almost all Canadians are immigrants or refugees. While it remains a debate among archeologists about just who arrived when and whether they came in boats or walked across the land bridge from Siberia, it's safe to say that at least 13,500 years ago there were people hunting camels and dodging lions in southern Alberta.

Not your relatives? Then you are a Johnny-come-lately. And, depending on when your forebears came to Canada, you may owe a particular debt to the descendants of those first human explorers who did venture over here.

Secondly, one of the core values of our faith—one we share with Jews and Muslims—is to take care of the vulnerable.

Nor can we forget that Jesus and his family were once refugees.

So how can some Christians oppose letting in refugees right now, particularly those fleeing from Syria?

A possible answer came from a minister who had been talking with a church member who said she had no

logical reason to oppose the congregation's refugee project, it was just a feeling thing.

Feelings—emotions—are part of our humanity. Too often, we ignore the emotional side of arguments and try to create arguments from the head.

As Christians, we honour our whole being: we worship God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. So what are our feelings telling us?

In this case, the feeling has clearly been fear. Several shameful controversies during the recent federal election campaign played on fear of "others."

Fear has been used numerous times in recent years to herd people into believing in dubious or non-existent threats.

But if unchecked feelings are at the root of this issue, appealing to reason is not going to resolve anything—including the argument I've just made. The appeal has to be to feelings. To do that, I suggest reading Andrew Faiz's stories in this issue.

Because by feeling what these refugees are feeling, hearts can be changed. Andrew's stories are about real people, real families. Families who carry heartache in one pocket and hope in the other. They are the stories of people who have risked almost everything, because to stay was to risk more—their lives.

Turning the problems of the vulnerable into an ideological debate dehumanizes individuals. These tragic stories force us to remember that the only reason we aren't in their shoes and they in ours is the simple matter of where we—and they—were born.

No one "deserves" anything as a result of that chance: neither riches nor poverty, security or terror. But as members of a community who have had the great fortune to be born in or come to this country by choice and relative wealth, we are absolutely called upon to open our hearts and homes to those who weren't so lucky.

May we all do so with a joyful heart, thanking God for our many blessings and the opportunity to share them with others.

David Harris is the Record*'s publisher and editor.*

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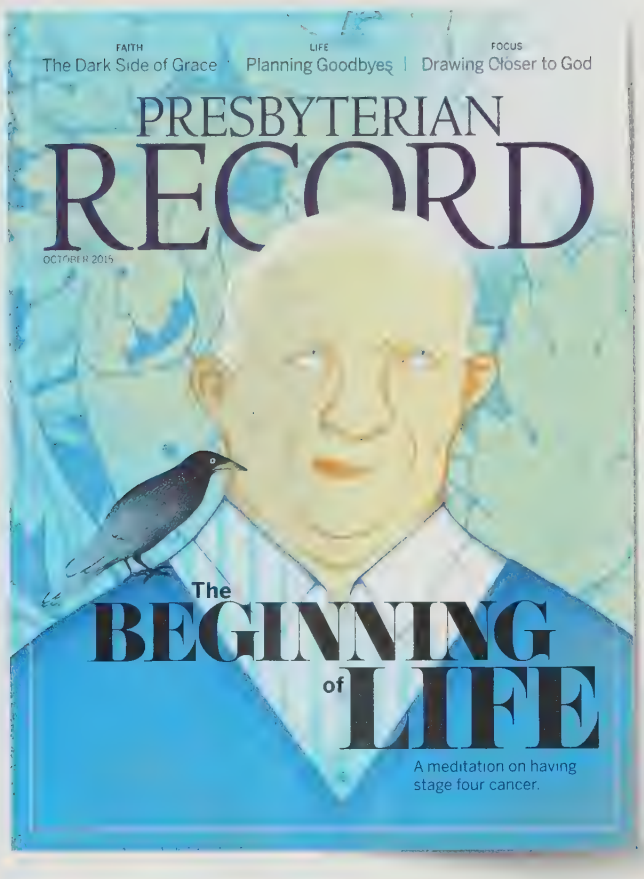


The Face of Reconciliation

Re Truth and Reconciliation coverage, September

Within the Presbytery of Winnipeg we held our own commemorative service. It seemed especially significant to make the effort here with the recent establishment of Place of Hope Presbyterian Church, a predominantly aboriginal congregation established within Winnipeg Inner City Missions.

The service was held at First Presbyterian, on June 7, a week later than other events due to our desire to include Vivian Ketchum, who was a delegate on behalf of the Presbyterian Church to the ceremonies in Ottawa. And in a time of worship including both traditional Christian hymns and aboriginal drumming, Rev. Margaret Mullin spoke of the power of the gospel to heal. Ketchum's presentation spoke of the very real hurt that had been experienced, and the very real hope that true reconciliation and healing could and would take place.

The highlight of our time together, however, wasn't the formal presentation of songs or speeches. It was in the giving and receiving of peace. In a circle that included close to 200 people, Ketchum led with shaking the hand of the person on her left, then going to the next and the next and all around the circle until she resumed her place. The first person with whom she had shaken hands then immediately followed her, followed by the next person, and so on, until everyone had given peace to each other, and each had received that ›

peace as well. It was significant because it wasn't just one person speaking on behalf of a group: the group spoke, in the handshake, of their own apology, their own place in making truth and reconciliation happen.

Over a meal hosted by the congregation of Place of Hope church, with funds from the presbytery, we shared the hurts, we offered and received peace, and took food together. It was a beautiful picture of what it can all look like when truth and reconciliation have fully taken root.

ANTHON BOUW, SELKIRK, MAN.

My husband, a retired Anglican clergyman, he 85 and I 83, have been reading the *Record* for years. When it comes we read it from cover to cover. As a warden in our little Anglican church, St. Thomas, Cambridge, Ont., the articles help me see things from a different view. In the area of truth and reconciliation, I wonder if some of the problem today is whether we can ever forgive ourselves for the tragedy against our Aboriginal people and can they ever forgive us? Only in forgiveness can we ever move on. We thank God that it now appears we are moving in that direction.

The September issue was excellent in all areas but I just had to write in response to the meditation article, "The Voice of the Bell" by Diane Munier. It was written with such excitement and joy. I felt as if I was right there and by the end of the article I found I was crying with hope for the future.

HELEN GARDINER, CAMBRIDGE, ONT.

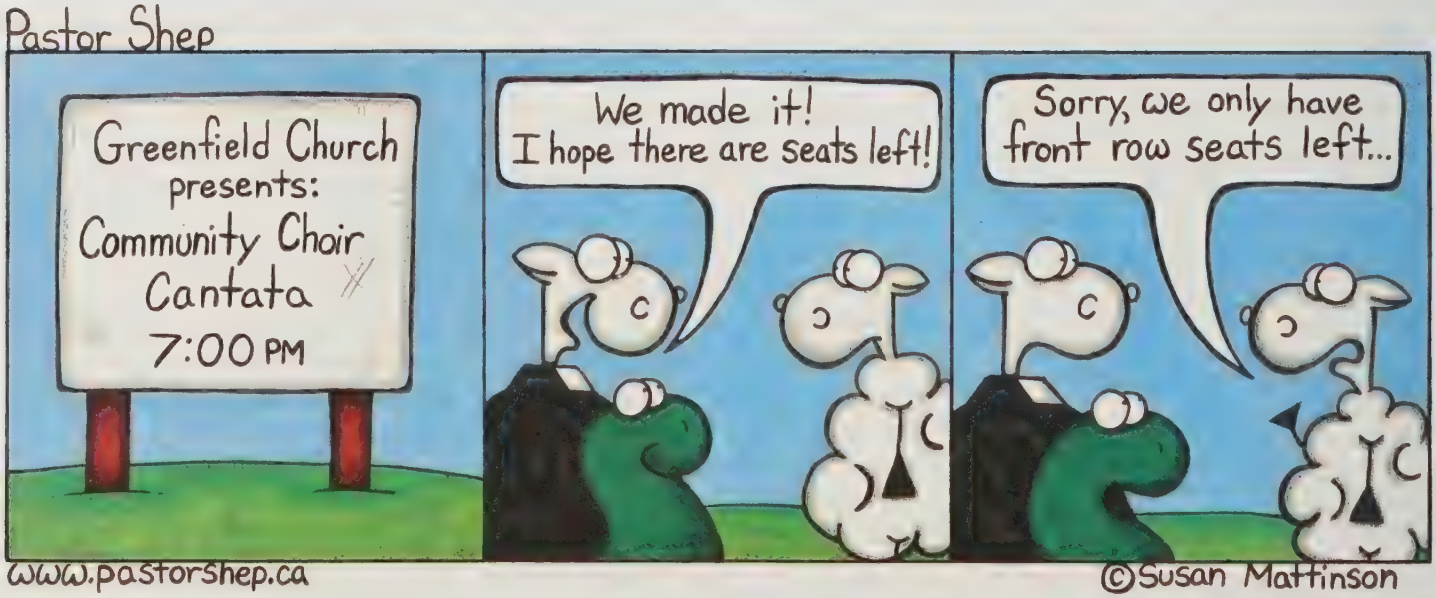
Many thanks for your coverage of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. A minor concern that I think is worth mentioning: the Truth and Reconciliation Commission did not make recommendations. They made "Calls to Action." The distinction is palpable since recommendations from commissions tend to gather dust on the shelf. The actions "called for" need to remain front and centre in our hearts, minds and actions for 100 years or more. After all, the damage was 150 years in the making.

ROD TOMLINSON, CALGARY, ALTA.

Shame Not the Answer

Re For the Record, September

First, let me state that I agree with



the fact that what happened to the thousands of residential school students was reprehensible and horrible. I do not however, agree with your thesis that "[W]e need to feel shame ..." for those horrible events. Speaking as a retired psychologist, I have counselled hundreds of individuals with various types of mental health disorders, many of which can be attributed to deep, corrosive shame. In my opinion, shame is not an emotion that promotes or facilitates true reconciliation and positive change. Shame is not a feeling that one has done something wrong. Rather, it is the feeling that one *is* wrong, inherently and irreparably defective.

I do agree with the notion you advance that "we need to come to our aboriginal brothers and sisters with the same vulnerability we come before God, asking for forgiveness and then asking what can we do now."

I believe that if we reflect in prayer on these horrors we are likely to feel a profound and complex sense of sadness, remorse, regret and contrition.

DAVID HOATH, VIA EMAIL

Becoming Orthodox

Re A Time of Discernment, September

We are not "orthodox" if, as Fred Stewart states, "the Church has at most times failed to practice Christ-like love and understanding to the LGBTQ ... in our midst and at our doors." So let's pray that we may become orthodox in Christ-like love.

JIM MCKAY, SASKATOON, SASK.

Embrace Our Standards

Re Choosing Change, June

The article clearly portrays the situation of our denomination now in relation to our past history in the short term. However, the vision of the necessary changes for us in the future in order to meet the challenges of the 21st century nearly all imply a departure, on our part, of our received subordinate standards—*Living Faith*, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Bible's message. Rather than following the envisaged path, we would do well to embrace the stance of our confessions more clearly and with greater enthusiasm.

J. ROSS H. DAVIDSON, THETFORD MINES, QUE.

Funeral Etiquette

Given my 85 years on this planet, and the fact that last year I attended the funerals of 13 good friends, I feel qualified to offer a suggestion regarding funerals. Too many feature uncontrollable grief of family members who attempt to express their inexpressible love for the deceased. The public outflow of tears is embarrassing to many if not all who attend. At the other extreme, some find the occasion an opportunity for a joke-fest.

My suggestion is that people be encouraged, or even instructed, to declare their affection and/or humour not at the service in the sanctuary, but at the reception following. Granted, there are occasions of clearly scripted, eloquent tributes which deserve to be heard. Otherwise, it may be that faced with a congregation so formally arranged in pews, the speakers are intimidated and unable to control their emotions. In the less formal setting of the reception, tears may be fewer, the humour better appreciated and those attending less embarrassed.

WILLARD POTTINGER, VIA EMAIL

All letters—taken from emails, by post, online comments and from the Presbyterian Record Community Facebook group—have been edited for space. There are many ways you can join the conversation, by pen or by keyboard. Share your voice.

ehm

Evangel Hall Mission

Out of the Cold Program

As a partner agency with the Out of the Cold program, every Tuesday night from November 1st until March 27th, Evangel Hall Mission will provide overnight accommodation for 30 homeless men and women.

This program provides people a safe and inviting place to have a hot meal and a warm bed.

While we are able to provide the space and staff to support this life saving program, we still need help. We are currently looking for a small group of volunteers to provide, prepare and serve a meal for 30 people on Tuesday evenings between 5-7 pm. If you would like to help, but are unable to volunteer, a donation of $180 would provide us with the means to purchase a dinner and a breakfast for one overnight stay.

For more information about this program or to volunteer please contact Bob Price at 416-504-3563 x240 or bob.price@evangelhall.ca.

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POP CHRISTIANITY

Faith, Works, Praise

A rich journey in Hungary. By Andrew Faiz

Two flash portraits of two of the most interesting people I met in Hungary—and a really quick note:

First: Daniel Szabo, in his 80s, an elfin man, and the 1996 recipient of the E.H. Johnson Award for cutting-edge mission for his work with the Roma. Locals joke it is impossible to give him a gift because he'll just turn around and give it to the Roma.

Szabo was denied access to his seminary graduation more than half a century ago because of his thesis paper, in which he argued that pastors should preach the gospel and not take sides with political parties. From what I understand Szabo was not saying pastors should not be involved in political or social issues; he certainly sees the Bible as an active living document. Back when he was a younger man, the politics were dangerous. His country was caught in the geopolitics of the times between fascists, communists, freedom fighters and many other tensions. In those times, Szabo called for scriptural adherence.

It cost him his career as pastor; he found a different living as a lay leader within the Hungarian Reformed Church. Here's a man who has born in the shadow of the Great War when his country was carved by the League of Nations, through the Second World War, under the Nazis and then the Soviets. And over dinner, if you are so blessed to sit beside

Just as the needs grew, the funding streams dried. That's often the case when doing advocacy work

him, he'll tell you this: Empires come and go; scripture is constant.

Second: Dóra Kanizsai-Nagy is the head of the refugee ministries for the Reformed Church in Hungary. She has been a passionate voice for asylum seekers in Hungary, working with refugees for many years. When a World Council of Churches delegation passed through Budapest she proudly took them to a restaurant owned by a Bangladeshi family she had worked with and helped settle.

In an interview she did for her denomination's website she said: "Recognized refugees look upon themselves as guests: they got a new chance in a safe country where they can let their children go to the school and the child comes back in the afternoon without getting exploded on the street. A basic principle of the refugee mission is that we look upon these people as guests too—not as people in need, not as ill people, not as wounded puppies—but as people for whom we try to provide every means to start a new life."

That brings the gospels alive for me. That tells me who I am as a Christian. It is, as in all things, the way faith changes your perspective.

Kanizsai-Nagy's work has often been done within the walls of St. Columba Scottish Mission, an English Presbyterian congregation in Budapest. That's where I met her talking about her financially challenged ministry. Just as the needs grew, the funding streams dried. That's often the case when doing advocacy work.

I went to St. Columba for worship on my last Sunday. I had been across Hungary and Ukraine, to borders and had many experiences and adventures, and attended a few services. But I felt absolutely at home with a Presbyterian liturgy. It was my most comfortable hour.

Gospel, advocacy and worship—faith, works and praise. That was a rich walk with Jesus in a strange land.

Andrew Faiz is the Record's *senior editor.*

BULLETIN

Community and World News

PHOTOS ON LEFT COURTESY OF RICK FEE; ON RIGHT BY CONNIE WARDLE.

RETIREMENT

'Prophet, Guide, Counsellor'

Rev. Dr. Richard Fee retires. By Amy MacLachlan

"I am a part of all whom I have met."

Such were the words of Rev. Dr. Richard Fee, spoken at his retirement ceremony at Trinity York Mills, Toronto, on Sept. 24. It was an apt comment—coming from someone with nearly 40 years of experience as a missionary, minister and most recently as general secretary of the Life and Mission Agency. He has served the Presbyterian Church in many ways, and during his address, Fee touched on them on all.

But it was when he spoke of Nigeria—a country he lived in for 17 years after being ordained in Killam, Alta., in 1976—that a deep connection and love was most evident.

"Nigeria infuriated me, challenged me, pushed me to the extreme, and rewarded me, loved me and embraced me like no other place in the world. It informed who I am today."

Fee also mentioned his time studying at Knox College, Toronto, his formative years growing up in Alberta, his 13 years as director of Presbyterian World Service & Development, the ecumenical organizations he has been a part of, his time in Ottawa and his brush with politics, and his years at the national office, calling the staff at 50 Wynford Drive in Toronto "the most unsung, dedicated people ... who realize a call from Jesus Christ is special and unique."

"I learn from people," he continued, "from watching and hearing their stories." ›

RETIREMENT, continued

People close to Fee recounted their own stories and offered their blessings. Longtime friend, Ray Drennan, said that Fee "poured his heart and soul into Nigeria and risked his life many times for that church."

"He is not easy to work for," Drennan added. "He is demanding. But he is doubly demanding on himself."

His brother, Doug Fee, called him "a peacemaker," relating the story of his ordination which took place in the Roman Catholic church in Killam. Prior to this, there had been rumblings and grumblings between denominations in that small town, but Fee's ordination nevertheless occured in the Catholic building. When it came to the laying on of hands, in walked the priest who asked permission to lay his hands on Fee as well.

"Rick's ordination did more for ecumenism and to heal the rift in that town than anything ever could."

Calling him a "prophet, guide and counsellor," he said his brother "exemplified" Jesus' words in Matthew 25:40, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

Rev. Karen Horst, moderator of the 2015 General Assembly, wrote in a letter to Fee, "He has set the bar for Christian service very high."

Rev. Ian Ross-McDonald, who succeeds Fee as general secretary, noted that Fee didn't merely work, but lived out his "unique selfhood."

"Vocation is a way of life," he said, "a lifetime of contributing to something timeless and great. ... Many of us can say that we've touched the lives of people. Your ministry has actually saved the lives of people."

The ceremony included a song performed by Nigerian friends, and Tina Turner's "You're Simply the Best" accompanied by a slideshow of photos.

When Fee was inducted as general secretary of the LMA in 2005 (following his stint as moderator of the 2004 Assembly), he referred to two hymns, saying, "I endeavour to live out these words."

One of those hymns was "May the God of Hope Go With Us Every Day." Here are the words:

Praying, let us work for peace,
Singing, share our joy with all,
Working for a world that's new,
Faithful when we hear God's call.

"Remember to appreciate the small things in your life," Fee said in closing. "Always give thanks for those little things. God bless you, and thank you."

Amy MacLachlan is the Record's *managing editor.*

COMMEMORATING A LEGACY

PHOTO BY ELIZABETH KEITH

An intimate ceremony at Beachwood Cemetery, Ottawa, in late August celebrated the life of Dr. Peter Henderson Bryce, a man remembered as a pioneer for public health. During the event, a plaque was unveiled as part of the cemetery's great Canadian profiles project.

Born in 1853, Bryce was a Presbyterian and, for about 20 years, parishioner at St. Andrew's, Ottawa. He spoke out for better health care and treatment for children in residential schools. In 1907 he published a devastating report that outlined the abuses and conditions that these children were subject to, alleging that staff and church officials withheld and falsified children's death records. He followed this in 1922 with a book, *The Story of a National Crime*, which focused on the high incidence of child mortality in the schools.

Bryce died in 1932. The plaque, which highlights his work, struggles and legacy, was unveiled by his graveside, which is surrounded by a grove of maple trees.

"Maple is a strong tree. It's sweet, it's generous and it won't fall over with the coming of storms," said Albert Dumont, a human rights activist who spoke at the unveiling.

Marie Wilson, one of the commissioners of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, said Bryce didn't want to divide people with his work. The commemoration offered a new perspective in the current practice of acknowledging our wrongdoings.

Hearts were planted at Bryce's grave, much like the ones planted at Rideau Hall during the final TRC event, to show appreciation for his acts of reconciliation.

Bryce's great-grandson, Andy Bryce, is working on a documentary entitled *Finding Peter Bryce*. He hopes the film will shed light on his advocacy work and the great man behind those actions.

— Elizabeth Keith

Faith Leaders Sign Statement on Climate Change and Poverty

Twenty-six faith leaders signed a statement in late September calling for action on the "twin challenges" of climate change and poverty in Canada.

The statement notes in particular the challenges faced by Canada's indigenous peoples who "have long experienced the effects of poverty, and are commonly among the first to experience the effects of climate change."

The five-page statement calls for action on a number of fronts including the creation of a comprehensive plan to decarbonize the Canadian economy and set ambitious emission reduction targets, steps to eliminate poverty and homelessness, and embracing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

"When we speak ecumenically it carries more weight," said Rev. Karen Horst, Moderator of the General Assembly, who signed the statement on behalf of the Presbyterian Church. She noted that we never know when a pivotal moment might come and the voices of churches and other faith groups can tip the balance.

The statement, which was coordinated by the Canadian Council of Churches, was released in advance of the United Nations' approval of the Sustainable Development Goals. These 17 goals will succeed the Millennium Development Goals, which are due to expire at the end of the year, and will run from 2016 to 2030.

You can find the full statement online at councilofchurches.ca/faith-climate-justice, and can learn more about the Sustainable Development Goals at sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics. —*Connie Wardle*

PHOTO BY ANDREW FAIZ

New Record Staff

The *Record* is excited to announce that Lisa Van Arem has joined our team as director of development.

A native of Calgary, Van Arem has more than 25 years of experience across all facets of fundraising, including working for several faith-based organizations. She has also earned the coveted professional qualification of CFRE—a Certified Fund Raising Executive.

Van Arem will be leading the *Record*'s efforts in fundraising, including developing programs to encourage new donors and make it easier for donors to support the magazine. She will also be meeting with many donors across the country.

The *Record* relies on donations from readers to help fund its work and keep subscription costs down. Van Arem said she is looking forward to getting to know both the magazine and the donors who help make it possible. —*AM*

PROMINENT PRESBYTERIAN EVANGELIST DIES

On Sept. 23 the Presbyterian Church bid farewell to one of its best-known evangelists, Rev. Dr. Larry Brice, founder of Reachout Ministries and host of the television program *Reachout for Life*. He died following a battle with cancer at the age of 71.

"His heart was really to talk to his own generation here in Canada; that was God's calling on his life," said his wife, Karen Brice.

Larry and Karen founded Reachout Ministries in 1992. In addition to Larry Brice's television ministries and speaking engagements, his work has included evangelistic campaigns, international missions and tours, and writing three books. He also served as a pastor, most recently at St. Paul's in Burlington, Ont.

He hosted *Reachout for Life* for 11 years, interviewing prominent Christians and closing each broadcast with a reflection and a call for viewers to commit their own lives to Christ.

"He had boundless energy to serve the Lord," said Karen. "But he was one of the most humble people. He had five degrees, he was on television, he wrote books; some people would try to uplift him as being a great man of the church but he was a very humble man and put everybody before himself. A real servant pastor."

Reachout Ministries will wind up at the end of the year, but donations can be made in memory of Brice to help cover the ministry's outstanding costs. Donations can be made online at canadahelps.org/en/charities/reachout-ministries or by mail: Reachout Ministries, 27 Ashbury Lane, Simcoe ON N3Y 0A4. —*CW*

IN THE NEWS

'Enough is Enough'

Almanarah churches cry out for Syrian families. By Laura Heming

Rev. William Khalil of Almanarah Presbyterian Church in London, Ont., is feeling first hand the immense impact of the Syrian refugee crisis. As a church body with familial ties in Syria, this Almanarah congregation finds itself crying out for the peace of God—a prayer Khalil feels is the only response left.

"There are a lot of stories out there that I have stopped reading. Enough is enough," said Khalil. "The only one who can approach this is God. It's above my ability and the ability of my people to handle all the persecution."

Almanarah London hopes to extend hospitality at this time more than ever. Within the past two months, the church has welcomed in a recent immigrant couple and their two children to be a part of their church family—a family that has watched the graphic tragedy that exists in Syria growing worse with time.

Khalil believes even this young family's ability to immigrate to the U.S. and later Canada is a rarity. From what he has heard from family and friends in Syria, the ability for Christians to escape is next to impossible.

"We cry for our family members, wishing there was a way to bring them. All the family we have over there won't make it. The Christian people of Syria have a difficult time leaving because they are persecuted for being Christians. Even if they are found out in the midst of immigrating, they will be thrown overboard. Some would prefer to die in their homes than die out at sea," said Khalil.

There are Almanarah Presbyterian churches in Mississauga, Hamilton, London and Winnipeg. Almanarah means lighthouse in Arabic and the churches exist to reflect God's light in their cities, especially to those who come from Arabic-speaking countries.

> 'We as a church encourage people to face the troubles and depend on His protection. We know that God is living and we know that He is protective'

"Our purpose is to be a family for newcomers and to walk through life with them," said Khalil. As a part of their regular mission, the London congregation is trying to extend relentless hospitality to recent immigrants by helping them get established, find jobs and places to live. Because of this experience, Khalil believes that Almanarah churches across Canada are a key resource for Christians to consult during this time of crisis and interest in refugee sponsorship.

"The church needs to help support families in the Middle East to come over. We have the language and ability to provide support ... [and] the PCC as a whole has the resources and heart to make an impact. Practically speaking, congregations that desire to do something should go to an Almanarah congregation and ask for people in the Middle East to cry for, to pray for and to support. I assure you there is a long list of families we have needing that support. It will be a wonderful place to start," he explained.

Through the trying times, Khalil continues leading his church in remembering what the word of God has said about suffering.

"The Middle East is the land of Jesus Christ—we know that it is normal that we'll face persecution because that's what Christ told us. We as a church encourage people to face the troubles and depend on His protection. We know that God is living and we know that He is protective," says Khalil.

The global church must continue to pray for wisdom and resources to help brothers and sisters in the Middle East, said Khalil. Though there seems to be no hope to cling to in a situation such as this, he urges the church to remember its purpose.

"When Muslim people need help they go to the mosque, and Jewish people to the temple. Just the same, when Christians need help, they need to go and rely on the church, not the government. We as a global body need to be praying consistently for peace and protection, for perseverance and strengthening of faith. Those in the Middle East are a part of us, and if we are in a safe country, that gives us even more responsibility to act in these times."

Laura Heming was the Record's *summer intern. She lives in Hamilton, Ont.*

Faith.

Deepening your relationship with God

ISTOCK

LEADERSHIFT

Confessing Faith Out Loud

Moving from membership to missional disciple.

By Ross Lockhart

Years ago I met one of our church "Alumni Association" members at a funeral reception. You know, those social settings with weak coffee and sandwiches with the crusts cut off. I introduced myself to a person standing by herself and she told me, "I used to go to your church."

"Is that right?" I said with mild interest.

"Yeah, but my husband was transferred to another city and we moved our membership."

"But you are back now in the neighbourhood?" I inquired.

"Oh yes," she replied in a clipped tone, "we moved back a couple of years ago." Sensing she was on a roll she said, "We called to transfer our membership back here but I was told by your secretary that we'd have to stand up at the front on a membership Sunday and confess our faith in Jesus."

"Yes..." I said cautiously, sensing ›

LEADERSHIFT, continued

this story had layers to it, "that's right, we like to celebrate new and returning members with the congregation and together rededicate our lives to the Lord."

"Well, I just told your secretary I wasn't going to do that."

Pastorally, I said, "Oh, are you uncomfortable standing up in front of large numbers of people?"

"No, don't be silly," she said, "I speak in front of crowds all the time."

Really confused now I said, "Well, what was the problem?"

She replied sardonically, "Well I made a confession of faith a long time ago when I was a teenager during confirmation. How ridiculous! How many times do you have to confess your faith in Jesus, really?"

I blinked and took a breath. "Well, we are recovering sinners, so I suppose we need to confess the Lordship of Christ every day; sometimes multiple times in the day. It would be like a husband saying to his wife, 'I told you I loved you once on our wedding day and I don't need to ever say it again.'"

She snorted. "Well, I don't know about that. Besides, we called another church and they were more than happy to take our membership—and pledge—without asking us to do a thing." She turned on her heels, teacup and crustless sandwich in hand, and walked away.

Today, the Holy Spirit is shaping and equipping mission communities to be places so different from "country clubs of religion." The *Field of Dreams* adapted line, "If you build it, they will come" approach to worship and witness has shipwrecked on the shoals of secularity and consumerism. Judging a church's effectiveness based on "noses and nickels" alone with its assumption that offering a "quality worship service" will be fulfilling the Great Commandment/Commission is wearing thin. Despite how good the coffee is or how "friendly" the church describes itself, more and more people in the Gen X and Millennial category pass by the church and see it as something irrelevant to their everyday, ordinary lives.

Theologian Doug Hall notes in *Why Christian*: "The Christendom into which I was born ... no longer exists—pockets and vestiges of it notwithstanding. Few people in the Western world today are 'caused' to be Christians by the sheer accident of birth. Many may start out that way, but fewer and fewer find inherited Christianity reason enough to stay Christian."

It's an exciting time to be a follower of the risen Christ these days as membership becomes less and less valuable as a marker of commitment

It's an exciting time to be a follower of the risen Christ these days as membership becomes less and less valuable as a marker of commitment. Of all places, the Vatican is leading the way with Pope Francis offering us a glimpse of what true gospel witness looks like in this time and place. Catholic priest friends of mine are very clear—nothing will change doctrinally under Francis, at least not in the short term. What has changed, however, is a visible, authentic witness to the gospel that calls people to practice what they preach. As Francis states in his incredible work *Evangelii Gaudium*: "The Gospel joy which enlivens the community of disciples is a missionary joy." Francis declares that Christians have a fundamental choice between an "evangelizing Church that comes out of herself" and a "worldly Church that lives within herself, of herself, for herself." Francis has given the worldwide, small "c" catholic church the challenge of becoming "missionary disciples" sent forth to live and proclaim the gospel—a far cry from the passive outsourcing of baptismal vows to paid clergy that the worst of the mainline Christendom church encouraged. Our worship glorifies the Father, Son and Holy Spirit by sending missionary disciples out to seek and save the lost.

A few years ago my wife Laura officiated at a large funeral for a young person killed in a ski accident. As you can imagine, the church was full of Gen Xers and Millenials. For many, it was their first time in a church. The next day she received an email from a young mom who asked Laura to meet her for coffee.

In her grief and confusion, she poured out her heart in the local coffee shop and grappled with the definitive claims of the gospel presented in a Christian funeral. "That place you work, the church," she said hesitantly, "I'd like to come again and keep asking questions but I don't know." She paused for a moment. "Is it okay if I just show up on Sunday or is it like a private club where I need to be sponsored in?"

Ouch. And yet, as the Holy Spirit got a hold of that person's life, it was a pleasure watching her come to life in Christ as an adult convert. Technically she "joined the church" and became a member but when you ask her what happened she will simply say, "God got a hold of me and now I'm a disciple of Jesus." May it be so—again and again.

Rev. Dr. Ross Lockhart is associate professor and director of the Centre for Missional Leadership at St. Andrew's Hall, Vancouver.

ISTOCK

PROGRESSIVE LECTIONARY

Apocalyptic Advent

What Advent means to us depends on who and where we are.

By Laurence DeWolfe

Luke 21:25-36

Advent comes but once a year. That doesn't make preaching in Advent easier. We'd rather think and worship ahead to Christmas. Some among us long to hear more about the end times and the saving judgment to come. We're sure we know who will win and who will lose when Jesus comes to sort it all out. Most of us are happy to leave all warnings and dire predictions buried in the Bible, somewhere deep and dark, down near the Levitical purity code. Singing "Child in the Manger" in November may be a tad early, but let's not do "Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending" either.

Where we stand, or where we sit, determines how we hear apocalyptic scriptures. Jesus' first followers, many of them displaced persons, most of them powerless, heard words like our gospel today in a way we can't appreciate. You sit in your pew in Saskatchewan, or with your Bible open on your kitchen table. Where and who we are colour our vision and filter the text's voice. We can't put ourselves anywhere, in any time other than where we are and when we live. That's not good or bad, it just is. And that's how it works when we ›

PROGRESSIVE LECTIONARY, continued

open the Bible. A Christian still in Iraq reads today's gospel, as ISIS draws near, and sees what we can't.

If my world, the planet I stand on with as much confidence as I can muster, is very small it will always be under threat. My little world will shake in the slightest breeze of change. Millions of people today have no more of the earth to stand on than the fence line they can walk around in one endless day. They have no choice, no power to change their places. Jesus offered his first disciples hope there might be more for them than tradition and Empire allowed, but for many of them there was little in this world they could safely call their own. Your life and mine couldn't be more different than the lives of people we meet in the gospels or hear about in the daily news.

How many of us choose to stand on our own little planets, hoping only that we can hold on as everything around us seems to be blowing away? We might hear Jesus say, "It's always been like this, and it seems it's getting worse. But I've got you. Don't be afraid." I hope our sisters and brothers in Syria hear Jesus say just that. Is that really what he's saying to you and me?

"Apocalypse" means opened curtains, a barrier peeled back to allow us to see behind what's before our eyes. When Christians began to interpret Jesus' words as apocalyptic, and then write new apocalypses, they read current events and imagined what they might lead to. They found God everywhere, even if all they could see around them denied God's presence and sovereignty. We can do that, too.

Difference is, we have the power and the freedom to respond creatively to signs that might herald the end of the world as we know it. But they don't necessarily mean the end of the world for all. We're called to action for the deliverance, here and now, of God's good earth and all God's people, from the forces of destruction and death. The curtain opened, we can catch the vision of what God wants for the world. From where we stand, Jesus has come and is among us.

Rev. Dr. Laurence DeWolfe is minister at Glenview, Toronto.

ISTOCK

RENEWAL

Telling the Old Story

Lest we forget. By Fred Stewart

To never forget.

Around the time most will receive this edition of the *Record*, Canadians will take time to observe Remembrance Day. It is how we reflect on the tremendous sacrifice made by so many Canadian men and women and their families. It is a time to tell the next generations that the life we share together in Canada had a price; and that price was willingly paid.

"Lest we forget."

As I write this I am also preparing for World Communion Sunday. There are significant parallels between Remembrance Day and Communion Sundays. We remember great sacrifice willingly made. We remember our freedom is the result of that sacrifice. We set aside times to commemorate both of these remembrances. We share with the next generations how blessed we are so that we never forget.

"Do this in remembrance of me."

As the memory of the great wars fade, with most of Canadians alive today born after the end of World War II, it will take much intentionality to keep the significance of Remembrance Day alive. With fewer living veterans and diminished Canadian Legion membership, our children ›

RENEWAL, continued

and grandchildren must take on the promise made to never forget. It is our responsibility to pass along the great debt of gratitude Canadians of succeeding generations owe.

Again, there is a parallel with Communion. Fewer and fewer Canadians attend churches and participate in the Lord's Supper. The Sacrament of Holy Communion is not known or understood by the vast majority of Canadians. Even in some churches, Communion has lost its power as people practice the ritual but have become theologically detached from the God-Man Jesus. They share at the table of Jesus while believing his death and resurrection, if Jesus ever existed at all, is a myth concocted in the early centuries of the Christian era.

In my visits to congregations across Canada, I couldn't help but notice that Communion was often elevated in the churches displaying renewal and growth. Many of them, for example, celebrate around the Lord's Table monthly instead of quarterly. I also have noticed that the observance is moulded to both be open to children and youth but also understandable by them.

Could it be that one of the impetuses of renewal is going back and "telling the old, old story?" Rehearsing again, sometimes in fresh and creative ways, the awesome truths that "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again."

"Do this in remembrance of me."

Rev. Fred Stewart is executive director of the Renewal Fellowship and minister at St. Andrew's, Bolsover, and Woodville Community churches.

ISTOCK

ORDINARY RADICAL

Pancakes and Bubblegum

Encountering others, encountering Christ. By Amy MacLachlan

Some time ago, my minister preached a sermon during which he said something that stuck with me. While I don't remember what the sermon itself was fully about, I do remember this: "What if the Bible isn't a book of certainties," he said, "but a book of encounters?"

Isn't that awesome?

To me, this is exactly what Jesus called us to (and what he practiced himself)—seeking to encounter others along our journey, and then encountering God through those encounters.

It's certainly what Shane Claiborne talks about in *The Irresistible Revolution*. That it's through meeting people—particularly encounters with people who are different than us, who challenge us, whom society deems wrong or weird or unclean—that real change begins to happen. ›

ORDINARY RADICAL, continued

Last month I mentioned my wonderful friend, Sara, whom I met years ago while attending a small agricultural college in Alberta. (At the age of 19, I wanted to breed and train racehorses, in case you were wondering.) I talked about Sara's family, and the hospitality that was offered at both her childhood home, and in her own house now. I followed up with Sara to find out more about this "radical" hospitality—this commitment to opening her home (despite being an introvert!) in order to create and experience wonderful encounters; encounters that change you. Here is some of what she shared with me:

"I enjoyed visitors at our house, short term or long term it was a very normal part of life to have others besides our family in the home. I loved when certain people came because it was a yearly event (I lived at a children's summer Bible camp from zero to 15—the cook would come late spring and mom would make sure we picked lilacs to decorate her room) and at Christmas time we had the same older lady join us year after year; some visitors were just like traditions. Others were more day-to-day; Sundays after church were always fun as we lived rather remotely during the winters so I thought it was great and 'just the way it was' to have people come and hang out, especially if they had kids. We would all share a simple meal of pancakes, every Sunday. Other times random people would drop in to visit our parents, a long ago friend or someone who they had met in passing, or a community member or during summers it was camp staff.

"My parents were both quite content to just have their children and raise a family. The idea of working at an aboriginal group home as house parents or later as a school religion teacher or grassroots pastors starting a church and then camp directors was never what they pictured. They were private and enjoyed their family. But they felt called by God to each job they ended up in—sometimes they felt called by God against their will."

And here's where it gets really good:

"When I asked my mom about how she overcame her desire for privacy, she said at each encounter or inconvenient visit where they wanted to be annoyed or felt too tired to face more people or conversations (they did have seven children of their own to care for) they would feel God saying 'your home is for me to use,' and when suppers didn't end up the way mom hoped or more people showed up then she thought she could possibly feed, she felt God say 'don't worry about the food—even if it does accidentally consist of pancakes filled with tiny bits of bubble gum.'

"Our house now is very open. Family, friends and visitors can show up early or last minute and if they are fine with the state of life our home is in and whatever we might be throwing together for the next meal they are welcome to stay as long as they want. ... It seems our kids feel the same way we do, they usually call out hearty welcomes to those who show up—especially the youngest ones. We do not allow rudeness or apathy towards guests, we teach our kids to say 'hi,' and to make eye contact with any who come in though we don't make them hug or be physical with people. We remind them that people are going through all sorts of things we don't see and that how we treat people can have a huge impact on them—if they are having a rough day a simple funny slight can be devastating so we discourage any sarcasm or joking at another's expense and we explain that if God wants to use us, we are hoping to let Him. We don't want to be selfish with our stuff because relationships are more important than any of that. Not always easy to put into practice. Now we do this with our kids not to 'teach them something we learned at church' but because it is, at the core, who God has allowed us to be."

Sara admits that she's an introvert at heart (and needs downtime once guests go home), but God has given her the ability to open herself to others. "God has graced me with a pretty laid back personality, discernment and sensitivity to where people are and what they need which makes this type of lifestyle not so hard. It's definitely because of Him working and living in me though because by nature I'm just about as selfish as they come."

Wow. Encounters with God. Encounters with others. They are changed and so are we.

I'm pretty sure Sara would say that her life has been a life of encounters. And isn't that a beautiful thing?

Amy MacLachlan is the Record's *managing editor.*

November Challenge

I don't have a new challenge for you this month. Let's just continue thinking about and practicing ideas we've looked at throughout the year: hospitality, community, outreach, service, simplicity, love. You get the picture. Enjoy.

Life

Thoughts and inspiration for your daily life

ISTOCK

FAMILY

A Long Road

Finding strength and courage along the way. By Katie Munnik

Ten years ago, I sat on a bridge in France and ate my breakfast. The Spouse and I were on the cusp of a long walk across Spain, but we lingered that morning over *pain aux raisins.* The weather was bright and warm, like summer itself was lingering on that bridge as long as it could, not wanting to let the moment come when it would get to its feet and begin a different journey.

That was the end of September, the start of something new.

That afternoon, when we registered as pilgrims and received our pilgrim passports, we were asked why we were undertaking this pilgrimage. For reasons religious, spiritual or "touristic?" Not a question that elicits a firm answer in this or any other century, I think, but a good question to consider at that stage of the journey. I seem to remember being asked the question again at the end of the road, but I can't recall if my answer was the same or ›

FAMILY, continued

I had a sense of the life of our home carrying on without the older kids in its own simple rhythms, but also preparing for their return when we'll sit around the table together and they will tell us how the road had opened for them today

different. Or what I answered at all.

It took us one month to walk from the Pyrenees to Santiago de Compostela and in the 10 years since, the pilgrim road has become a lens through which we see the days before us. Not an original image, of course. It is one of the oldest metaphors, and perhaps that adds to its power. Roads are made by walking, and knowing that so many have found strength and encouragement in the image of the road strengthens us for the very long walk ahead.

Since that bridge morning, three children have joined us along the way and we've moved house half a dozen times. Now here we are again, another sunny autumn, another set of first steps.

The kids have finally been offered places in a school here in Cardiff, and Sept. 28 was day one. Which meant our weekend before that was full of errands and emotions. All that back-to-school shopping squeezed into one Saturday one month late. And as well as the sock department, we were tackling closure.

Starting something new does mean that the old—the familiar—really has come to an end. Both the older kids tiptoed around the finality of this all weekend, taking turns leaning into my shoulder and muttering questions and hopes. I wonder if they spoke with each other about all this. I wanted to suggest it a few times, but then it would feel forced, persuaded. But I hope that they do find ways to unravel these tangling hearts together.

Like that morning 10 years ago, today was bright and warm. Plum and I played in the garden with his wooden trains. Then he sat under my desk (drawing on the legs and wall with purple marker as I later discovered) as I wrote for a while and then we made cranberry oatmeal cookies to take to the school at pick-up time. I had a sense of the life of our home carrying on without the older kids in its own simple rhythms, but also preparing for their return when we'll sit around the table together and they will tell us how the road had opened for them today. I can't say it takes more courage to be at home waiting, but I must say that it does take courage.

This is the start of a different stage of the journey for them—in a different school and with different people. We don't know how long this stage will last or what they will learn along this road. I pray that there will be welcome and challenge, friends and nourishment that will help them to deepen who they are, strengthen and grow. As with every stage and every pilgrimage, I pray that they will know God along the way, that they will meet the light that forms all creation in the details of their days and that, all along this road, they will learn the work and the delight of love.

Katie Munnik is an Ottawa writer who recently relocated to Wales with her spouse and three growing children. Her blog, The Messy Table, appears every Monday on presbyterianrecord.ca.

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REFLECTION

A Life Well Lived

Lessons my father taught me. By Patricia Stephenson

Several years ago, for a course I was taking, I had the good fortune of being assigned to write a senior's recollections of their life. My dad, John Harden, was 81 at the time and I chose him as my subject. For Dad, it was an opportunity to reminisce about his younger years and reflect on how positive and negative life events affected his thoughts and outlook on life.

We settled at the kitchen table, with cups of tea and Dad's stash of chocolate chip cookies between us. Thoughtfully, Dad recounted his life story in great detail. He began with his earliest memory at age three, as he recalled a trip with his father to visit his newborn sister at the Mount Hamilton Hospital. He remembered the excitement of travelling up the Mount Hamilton Incline Railway in a Model T Touring Sedan, with curtains covering the windows.

Dad spoke of his childhood, the war years and marriage to the love of his life, the productive working years, retirement years, Mom's death and his many years beyond that. But more than any other event, it was his experiences during the Great Depression and his service in the army during World War II that coloured the way Dad lived his life. ›

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Be my rock of refuge..." Psalm 71:1,3

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REFLECTION, continued

'In all these situations, I prayed to my God to watch over me. He did then and He has always since'

Growing up in a Christian household, my father's family attended church every Sunday—morning, afternoon and evening. Dances and the cinema were forbidden. By age 12, Dad rebelled against his parents' religious restrictions, some of which "just didn't make sense." By adolescence, he made decisions based on his own understanding of his faith, chose to attend church with friends, and decided what was not reasonable within the religion. Eventually, his parents relented, and Dad recalled seeing *Danny Boy* and a few other movies that his parents approved of.

The difficulties of the Great Depression left their mark on Dad. He recalled the front door slamming and his parents fighting when his father quit his job as foreman at the Hamilton Dairy, after working there for 10 years. Although I don't know what the dispute was about, I can only imagine how distressing this would have been for my grandmother in those difficult times. The next day, a man came to the house and told my grandfather to swallow his pride and take his job back. He was stubborn, and refused to go back to the dairy. Dad was 12 years old at the time, and said that it took him years to forgive his father for the hardship he caused the family.

It was three years before my grandfather worked again. A private lender held the mortgage on their house. Out of work and not able to pay the loan, my grandfather fully expected the family would have to walk away from their home. The story goes, much to my grandfather's surprise, the lender responded with, "What am I going to do with your house? Stay in it, and when you get work, you can start paying again."

Between my grandmother taking in sewing jobs and government relief, they managed to get by. Dad remembered feeling fortunate that they weren't out on the street, and thankful that the family still managed to eat well.

Years later, as an adult, Dad began to understand his father's temperament—a man who was sent as a child to live at a Barnardo Home (homes for orphans and vulnerable children) in England, and later shipped off to Canada as part of a program to settle boys on farms. Himself a war veteran, in WWI he was wounded by three gunshots to his face, head and shoulder. Consequently, he suffered from shell shock, the common term used in those days for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Yet even through those difficult years, Dad could always find the positive. He recalled spending memorable occasions with his father, and camping at his uncle's farm. He realized that had his father not been out of work, the considerable time they spent together would not have been possible. In those years, the city dump was a playground for children. Dad and his friends would use their imaginations and forage for treasures they would later use to make things. The boys peeked into the holes the homeless lived in, and befriended a man they called "Eddie the Tramp."

By age 19, Dad joined the army, and spent close to four years overseas as a morse code operator during

the war. Growing up, I heard stories about camping at Stonehenge, sleeping in the cold and damp trenches, and of blankets that crawled with fleas. Dad's stories often centred on the people he met and the friends he made. Yet it wasn't until the afternoon of our chat over tea and cookies that Dad confided about the horrific images that were forever imprinted on his mind. Images of truckload after truckload of dead men, piled up high with their feet dangling out the back of the trucks.

As a contribution to a booklet I produced on stories of faith, my father wrote:

"As a 20-year-old in 1943, I was a member of the First Canadian Infantry Division sailing from Birkenhead, England for an amphibious landing in Sicily. There were 28 vessels in the convoy consisting of Liberty ships (freighters) and LSTs, escorted by four destroyers.

"On July 4, 1943 in the Mediterranean Sea just off Algiers, disaster struck. The ship on our starboard was hit amid ships by a torpedo and sank in 10 minutes. Our first thought was of whom we might know aboard her. We spent a troubled night. The following day, the submarine torpedoed two more Liberty ships. They managed to limp into Algiers in North Africa. Many other close encounters occurred over the next three years, but I was fortunate and survived. In all these situations, I prayed to my God to watch over me. He did then and He has always since."

Settling down with their young family in the town of Oakville, Ont., my parents joined Hopedale Presbyterian in the late-1950s, with its young, vibrant and growing congregation. Dedicated to church life, my father served on several boards over the years, and he was always willing to pitch in and get his hands dirty when it came to the spring clean-up of the grounds. He held various roles within the church, including Sunday school superintendent, treasurer, elder for over 50 years and clerk of session for 14 years.

Never once did I question my father's faith in God. For me, it wasn't only his daily prayers and Bible reading that demonstrated his faith, it was the way he conducted his life. I recall reading a letter that had been tucked away in a file among my father's important papers. The handwritten note was from a businessman who had recently retired, yet had been a colleague of Dad's many years prior. The letter stated that he had learned much from my father during those years in business, and he thanked Dad for showing him how to treat others. It was a testament to my father's character and in the quiet way Dad lived his faith.

I asked my father what advice he would give, based on his life experiences. Dad was not usually forthcoming with advice, but since he was the subject of my paper, he thought for a long moment while I sat across from him at the kitchen table. This is what he shared: "Get along with others. Work hard and set goals. Do the best you can do wherever you work. Take opportunities that come your way. Share your knowledge in business. Live within your means. Be generous in giving your time to others. Lastly, treat others the way you would like to be treated."

Through my father's account of his life, he taught me the value of taking time in our busy lives to engage with others and listen. Really listen. We can learn a lot from the stories of others. Sometimes all we have to do is ask questions.

As I wrapped up my assignment, it occurred to me that I had received much more than pages upon pages of research. A first-hand history lesson, yes. But more than that, I learned about the man I call Dad, who summed up his years on earth as "a satisfying and good life." He attributed this to a wonderful 47 years of marriage, a good family life, many lifelong friends, work he enjoyed, no financial concerns, and God's protective hand through it all. I call it a life well lived.

Patricia Stephenson is a freelance graphic designer living in Oakville, Ont.

KNOX COLLEGE

Faith Matters in Changing Times

170 YEARS OF KNOX COLLEGE.

BY HARRIS ATHANASIADIS

What does the faculty do when their theological college is part of one of the largest and most diverse theological consortia in the English-speaking world and it is celebrating its 170th anniversary and the 100th anniversary of its building on the campus of the largest university in Canada? They write a book!

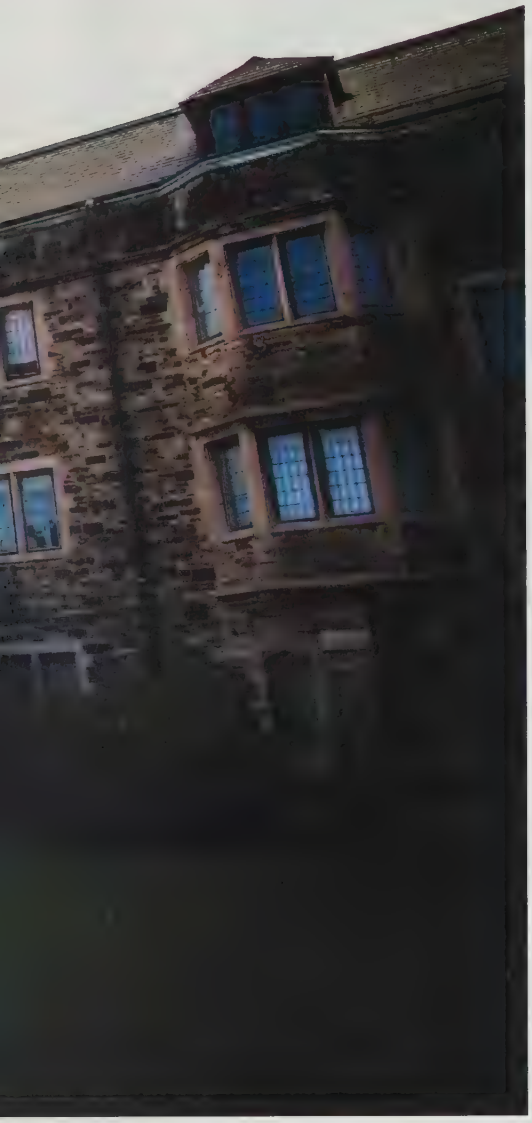
The title expresses Knox College's vision as well as its purpose as public witness within the university: *Faith Matters in Changing Times*, edited by Bradley H. McLean, on behalf of the Knox College faculty.

A generation ago, the academy's dialogue partners lived in Europe and North America. Today, the dialogue reaches much further. Knox College's global perspective and diversity is reflected not only in the student body, but also in the research, areas of academic interest and partnerships.

A generation ago, the church was focused on growth and expansion, and had a central role of influence in social and political life in Canadian society. Today, the church is being pushed to the margins of society and needs to find new purpose and direction in its witness and life. Again, the Knox College faculty engage this reality and relate their research and teaching to the changing times.

A generation ago, the church was part of the social mainstream establishment and mission was about "us" serving "them." Today, in a world that is increasingly "spiritual-but-not-religious," "pluralistic" and "secularized," the church has to find new and creative ways to be part of God's mission in the world where the boundaries are far more porous, inclusive and fluid.

To confess that "faith matters in changing times," the faculty have to take stock of where we have come from and explore where we can and must go in the future. They



are seeking to rediscover the centrality of faith in God for today through deep engagement with the scriptures, history and traditions, worship, mission and pastoral leadership of the church. Moreover, the faculty doesn't do their research and teaching as individuals in their own silos. Rather, teaching, learning and advanced degree supervision are done collaboratively among faculty and within the larger Toronto School of Theology. A collaborative spirit is part of the vibrancy of theological education and scholarship at Knox College.

All of this is beautifully reflected in Knox College's book of essays. Prof. Brian Irwin introduces the collection. Prof. John Vissers addresses our deep search for new identity and purpose as a church by reflecting on the ➤

Calvinism of Walter Bryden, who was professor of theology and principal of Knox College during yet another time of soul-searching for our church through and beyond 1925 when two-thirds of our members left. How do we bear witness to God without getting stuck in a dead, biblical literalism, despair or shallow experientialism disconnected from God and God's Word? Through a powerful doctrine of the Holy Spirit, Bryden offers a vision where a new word of the Lord may be heard that is biblical, inspirational and true to our human experience today as Christians within our churches.

Prof. Charles Fensham challenges the church to make a new missiological commitment to the welfare of our planet, and he sets out a spiritual path for congregations in five steps: "a public disposition of ongoing repentance, a humble and prayerful engagement within Christian community, an active engagement with the ecological crisis in the world (evangelism in community), a public telling of the story of the meaning of God's creation (proclamation), and a call to turn toward action for the integrity of creation (conversion)." Fensham elaborates on each of these five steps with practical and inspirational examples.

Prof. Stuart Macdonald writes about how the teaching of church history today must be different than a generation ago when the focus was Europe, North America and Protestantism, without an appreciation of the larger developments globally that have shaped the church. This must also include those whose voices were silenced or ignored. Macdonald also zeros in on the Protestant Reformation and how it is taught today, taking into account many of the alternative voices beyond Luther and Calvin, offering us different ways into what it means to be reformed and reforming.

Prof. Bradley McLean challenges the traditional study of the New Testament that focuses on historical context and the intention of the author. What's missing is an understanding of the larger patterns and structures of New Testament discourse, which writers like the Evangelists and Paul use to communicate the gospel. Identifying these patterns and structures gives us a deeper appreciation and understanding of the radical message of the gospel of Jesus Christ in a world where the gospel was claimed by Caesar. Where are Caesar and his gospel to be found today to which the gospel of Jesus Christ is a challenge?

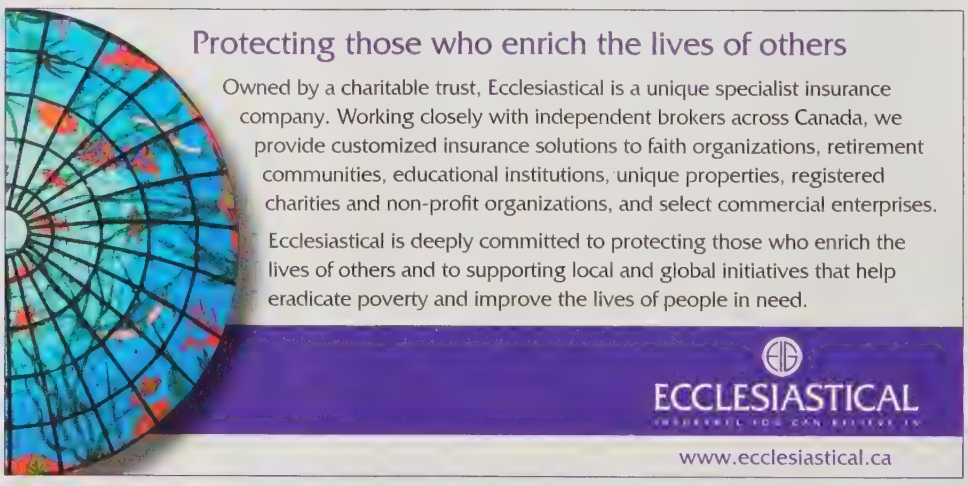
Prof. Pamela McCarroll addresses the modern and postmodern reality of cynicism, hopelessness, a relativism of values and lack of openness to transcendence. How does this affect us as persons and as congregations? By appreciating how we got to where we are in the Western world, she finds hope for a way forward through the witness of a man and a people outside the conventional church—the aboriginal leader Plenty Coups, chief of the Crow Nation. In a spirit of deep and radical hope, he led his people through the decline and loss of their culture, tradition and way of life. How can we as a church find our way in the new wilderness through which we are wandering?

Principal Dorcas Gordon, a biblical scholar and professor of preaching, addresses the divide that has often defined preaching—the divide between good biblical scholarship and attentiveness to the listeners' personal experiences. Good preaching today must engage the experience of the listener directly. However, engaging the listener must not be an excuse for shortchanging the hard exegetical work and study required for a genuine "Word of the Lord" to be heard in our time and place.

Finally, Prof. Nam Soon Song points to the work and witness of diaconal ministers who graduated from Ewart College over several generations. The church and its Christian education were taken outside the congregation into the wider world, redefining and expanding the boundaries of church. She highlights ministry to new immigrants in particular as an important opportunity. She argues that contrary to the narrow options of decline or growth, the witness of Ewart graduates in the past can inspire us today to find new direction for the church's mission and witness.

The writing is highly readable and accessible, as well as challenging and inspirational. The book offers a persuasive argument for how deeply faith matters in changing times and how faith can change both the world and us. This is promising news for the education and training of our ministerial leadership today and tomorrow in the Presbyterian Church in Canada. ●

Rev. Dr. Harris Athanasiadis is lead minister at St. Mark's, Toronto, and a sessional lecturer at Knox College.



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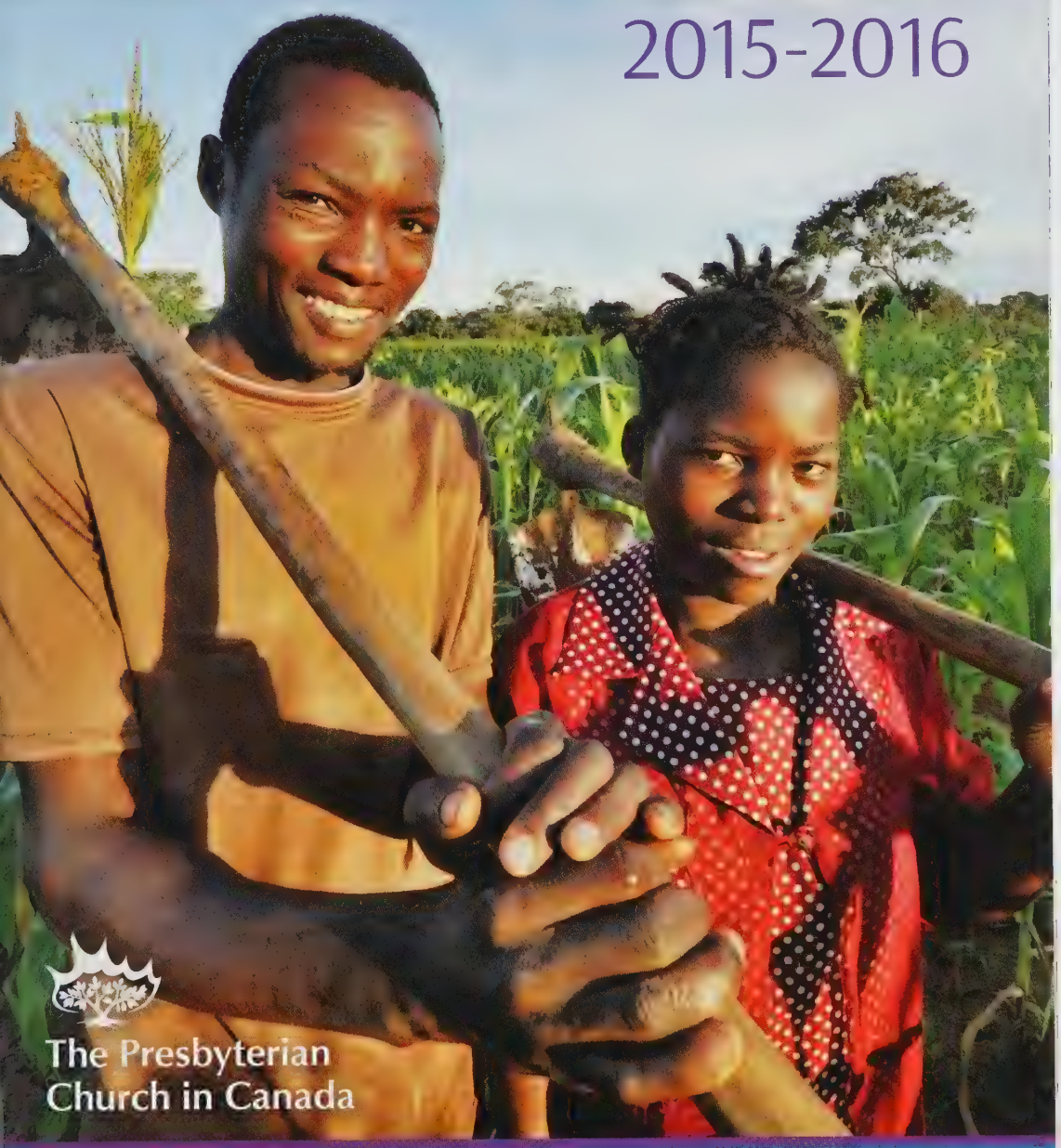

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Matthew 10:8

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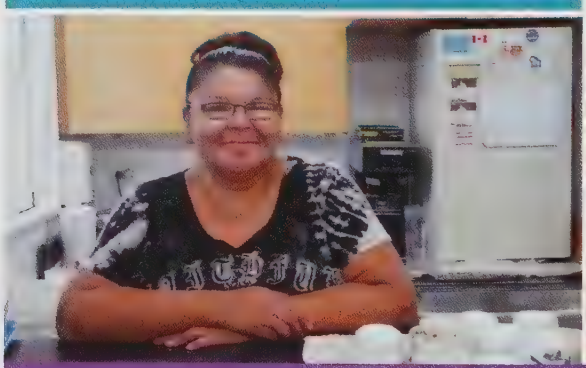

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is the development and relief agency of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. PWS&D's sustainable development programs help communities around the world overcome poverty. Find out more at WeRespond.ca.

PWAGR01

Sowing the Seeds of Food Security

Subsistence farmers in developing countries work hard on small plots of land, struggling to provide food for their families. You can help farmers learn to improve crops, conserve resources and sell their goods—providing food for today and an income for the future.

$8 provides tools (wheelbarrows, hoes and shovels) for farmers

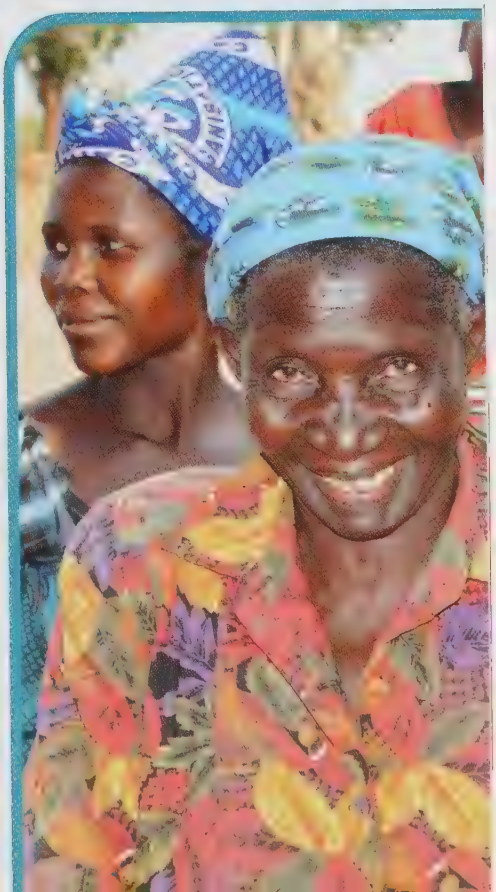
$17 helps a family plant fruit trees (peach, apple and plum)

$22 provides seeds for kitchen gardens

$122 gives a vulnerable family livestock (rabbits and cows)

$373 starts a school garden and teaches children about nutrition and healthy eating

$855 constructs one community seed bank



PWSSC03

Sunday School Challenge: Support a Savings Group✦

Take part in the PWS&D Sunday School Challenge and help make lasting improvements in the lives of women and their families in Malawi. Your support will help women work together to save money and access small loans, enabling them to provide for their families and improve the lives of everyone around them.

$348 helps six women join a savings group and access small loans

PWHEA01

From Sickness to Strength

Inadequate access to health care, high medical costs and limited knowledge about health prevent millions of people from living full and productive lives. Your gifts tackle maternal and child health issues, provide support to orphans and vulnerable children, improve nutrition for people affected by HIV, and empower communities to prevent the spread of the disease.

$8 provides needed medications for those confined at home with HIV/AIDS

$12 provides a mosquito net

$40 gives a hospital maternity unit labour and delivery supplies✦

$54 trains one volunteer to provide nursing care and support to someone confined at home with HIV/AIDS

$150 provides an HIV and AIDS support group with pigs to help improve their livelihoods

$490 supplies a delivery bed to a hospital maternity unit✦

PWSBSL01

The Power of 50,000✦

There are many things people need in order to survive – including nutritious food, education, health care and a safe place to live. You can help 50,000 men, women and children in Malawi break free of poverty by building sustainable livelihoods. Through your gifts, children will get an education, youth will train for jobs and entire communities will work together to improve the lives of everyone around them.

$20 provides toiletries (soap and basic hygiene supplies) for children

$70 provides sports equipment for students receiving school support

$230 supports a care group where mothers learn practical skills to improve family health

$450 supplies a sewing machine and cloth for a student learning tailoring

PWEDU01

A Classroom for Every Child

While we often take education for granted, many children in the developing world – especially girls – never have the opportunity to go to school. Education is one of the most critical tools in breaking cycles of poverty. By opening classroom doors and providing the necessary supplies and training, your gifts will help children reach their full potential and access better opportunities for the future.

$15 **provides school uniforms for orphans and vulnerable children**

$45 **trains one girl in peace, gender and human rights so she has the knowledge and confidence to build a better future**

$210 **provides one teacher with training to ensure a quality education**

$300 **sends a child to school for one year**

PWREF01

The van Mossel Refugee Support Fund

The van Mossel Refugee Support Fund is helping PWS&D work with refugees, both in Canada and internationally. It helps congregations sponsor refugees to Canada and provides emergency support around the world to people who have been displaced due to conflict or disaster.

ANY **A gift in any amount will allow PWS&D to provide hope and opportunity to some of the world's most vulnerable people.**

PWH20

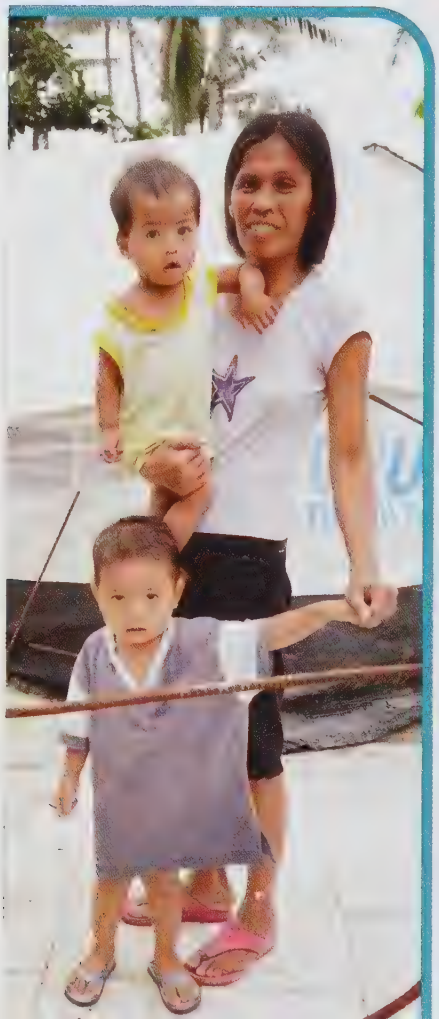
Fresh Water Renewal

Help a community access a sustainable water supply and proper sanitation facilities. Your gifts will help provide clean drinking water and help prevent the spread of waterborne illnesses.

$90 **installs a household latrine to promote better health**

$215 **trains a village water committee on well maintenance and water conservation to ensure water for the future**

$9,500 **builds a deep-water well in a community**



PWEMRG01

Respond to Emergencies

Respond to disasters, war and persecution by providing immediate relief, emotional support and long-term rehabilitation for people in crisis.

$22 **ensures a family has soap and other essential hygiene items**

$125 **supplies a family with an emergency food package, lasting one month**

$235 **provides a shelter kit for a displaced family**

Disasters strike when we least expect them. Help PWS&D respond as soon as an emergency occurs, by making a gift to be used where and when needed most.

$100 **responds to conflict and disaster immediately**

PWGIFT01

Make a bigger impact – give a gift together!

Join with others in your congregation to give a gift with a big impact! The power of giving together allows you to support the development of an entire community.

$855 constructs one community seed bank

$870 provides a women's self-help group with training✦

$4,675 stocks a health centre with medicine and supplies for one year✦

$9,500 builds a deep-water well in a community

✦ Donations made to items marked with ✦ receive matching funds from the Government of Canada.

International Ministries

sends mission personnel and supports leadership development, evangelism and innovative programs of church partners around the world. Find out more at presbyterian.ca/im.

IMIN03

Train Nurse Midwives

The Mid India Board of Educators' nursing schools train nurse midwives in India to provide health care throughout the country and especially for isolated populations. Help train nurse midwives by equipping nursing practice labs with mannequins, books and teaching aids.

$40 pays for six textbooks

$100 buys a whiteboard and other teaching aids

$600 provides one nursing educational mannequin

IMMA08

Support an HIV/AIDS Clinic

Ekwendeni Mission Hospital in Malawi is in the final stages of building a new HIV/AIDS clinic comprised of 15 rooms where patients will be cared for with dignity and high-quality medical care. A special area designed for children living with HIV will allow them to receive holistic care in a comfortable and welcoming environment.

$600 pays for construction and furnishing for one room

IMME01

Equip Christian Leaders in the Middle East

The Near East School of Theology, a Protestant seminary in Beirut, Lebanon, trains ministers and lay leaders from Lebanon, Iraq, Iran and Syria – some of the most dangerous places to live today. Students are earning Masters degrees in Christian Education, Theology and Divinity among others. Your gifts help keep a Christian witness in the turbulent Middle East.

$250 pays for one course

$400 provides textbooks for one year

$850 pays for monthly room and board for a student

IMMA07

Bring Hope to Prisoners

Prisons in Malawi are in desperate need. Inmates receive just one meal of thin porridge each day, and some risk starvation. Women, sometimes accompanied by their infants and toddlers, lack items of basic hygiene, toiletries and food for their children. Your gift will help the prison chaplain respond to these circumstances with pastoral care, weekly Bible study, soap, toiletries and occasional treats of food and drinks.

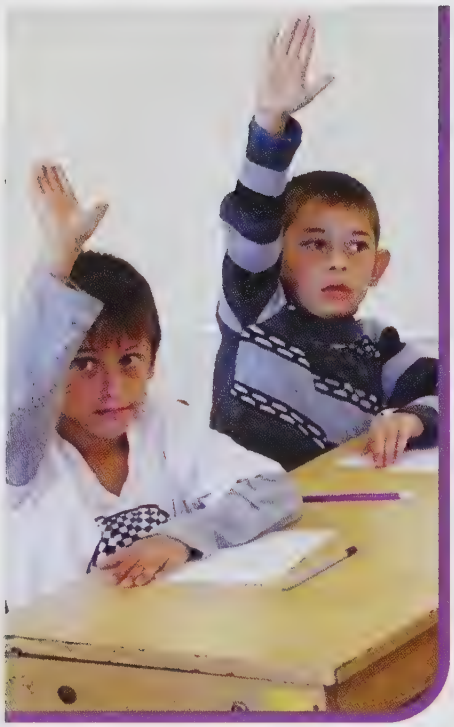
$10 buys one carton of soap

$15 buys a Bible or hymnbook in Chichewa

$35 provides drinks and snacks

$70 buys two goats to provide meat for meals

$160 provides transportation costs for prison visits



IMEE01

Give the Gift of a Future in Ukraine and Romania

It is hard to learn when you are hungry. The Reformed Church schools in Eastern Europe provide disadvantaged children with not just a quality Christian education, but with healthy food as well. The students are nurtured physically, mentally and spiritually and the future holds possibilities beyond their expectations.

$25 buses a Roma child to kindergarten or elementary school for one month

$200 provides food for one semester for a secondary school student

$800 fixes leaky roofs and maintains school vehicles

IMKE02

Help Prisoners Become Worship Leaders

The PCEA's Theological Education by Extension program in Kenya provides practical, interactive theological courses to help lay leaders understand scripture, apply it to their context and put it into practice. The course is now offered to prisoners who are eager to learn about God and turn their lives around. Help the PCEA achieve their dream of seeing 2100 inmates – from 14 prisons across Kenya– graduate with a diploma.

$15 provides an inmate with a Bible

$45 buys eight course books for one inmate

$1,250 pays for a graduation ceremony for one thousand prisoners

IMTA01 (Taiwan); IMNI04 (Nigeria); IMMU01 (Mauritius)

Translate the Bible

Did you know that there are still some people who cannot read the Word of God in their own language? You can help with translation and printing costs so that people in Taiwan, Nigeria and Mauritius can read and understand the Bible in a language that speaks to their heart.

$10 helps print the New Testament in Creole (Mauritius)

$15 helps publish a Bible in Kori, Ntsobo/Isobo, Eziullo and Onicha (Nigeria)

$15 helps publish an Amis, Drekay, Paiwan, Pinuyumayan or Bunun Bible (Taiwan)

Canadian Ministries

equips and supports congregations and ministries in Canada. Find out more at presbyterian.ca/cm.

CM24

Ministries with Aboriginal Peoples

The PCC partners with First Nations communities through eight different ministries in Kenora, Winnipeg, Mistawasis, Saskatoon, Edmonton, Vancouver, Duncan and the Cariboo region of B.C. These ministries provide a range of services including sanctuary, hospitality and fellowship over a meal, spiritual counseling, housing, arts and crafts programs, worship, healing circles and cultural renewal.

- **$40** provides day care for one day
- **$50** supports counseling and parenting classes
- **$100** buys musical instruments and/or art material
- **$150** buys books and supplies for a secondary school student

CM31

Offer Sanctuary and Hospitality to Refugees

Assist people who have fled persecution and violence in conflict regions of the world. Support Action Réfugiés Montréal as they help refugees rebuild their lives in Canada.

- **$25** buys telephone cards for 5 refugees in detention
- **$50** builds community by connecting refugees in a Twinning Program
- **$100** provides visits to the immigration detention centre for one month
- **$200** helps sponsor a refugee

CM41

Support Congregational Ministry

Encourage the work of smaller congregations in rural and remote areas and those reaching out to ethnic-specific communities in urban areas. Support ministries of hospitality, Christian education, pastoral counselling, outreach and worship.

$25 provides supplies for ESL classes

$75 buys music and art supplies for children's programs

$100 supports efforts to find employment

$150 provides pulpit supply for one Sunday

CM40

Give Hope to Vulnerable Women and Girls

Help empower victims of sex trafficking and those involved in the sex trade. Support ARISE Ministry as it journeys with women and girls who want to leave the sex trade and helps them to achieve their dreams and goals.

$25 pays for phone calls to family members

$65 buys clothes for a job or school interview

$100 pays for groceries

$150 buys books and supplies for a community college program

All the items in this gift catalogue are part of the bigger picture of hope and change that is happening around the world through The Presbyterian Church in Canada and our partners.

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Presbyterians Sharing is the national church fund that supports the overall mission and ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Congregations commit to raising an accepted allocation each year.

Presbyterian World Service and Development is the PCC's international development and relief agency. PWS&D raises funds directly from congregations and individuals – over and above gifts to *Presbyterians Sharing*.

Our mission, in a world of many nations, peoples, denominations and faiths, is to learn from one another and work together for the healing of the nations.

Blues Skies Ahead

ST. ANDREW'S HALL BELIEVES IN THE CHURCH'S FUTURE.

BY BOB PAUL

The skies were unrelentingly blue as my wife, Susan, and I drove northward from Los Angeles this summer. In early June the General Assembly appointed me dean of St. Andrew's Hall, and by month's end we were packed and on our way to Vancouver. As we cruised along the highway in the sunshine, we talked about the joy of moving closer to family and friends and the challenge of preparing leaders for the church's mission in 21st-century North America.

The day we drove into Vancouver, however, was surprisingly bleak. Hundreds of wildfires were burning in the forests of British Columbia, and the prevailing winds combined with a temperature inversion to envelop the city in a huge cloud of acrid smoke. It irritated the eyes and throat and made it seem as though we were landing on an alien planet—hardly an auspicious sign for a season of new beginnings!

Over the next few days, as the air gradually cleared, I found myself reflecting on the importance of keeping faith when the atmosphere casts a pall over our hopes. It is an apt metaphor perhaps for the struggle we face as church leaders. The symptoms of decline in all the Christian denominations of North America are obvious, and frankly can be depressing. No one has yet discovered a surefire method for church renewal. Moreover, when it comes to fostering Christian faith and values, the cultural atmosphere often seems filled with noxious fumes. How do we keep faith and hope alive in such conditions?

St. Andrew's Hall believes in the future of the church because we believe God is alive and active in the world, even in our very challenging culture. We are acting on that conviction through bold investments and creative innovation in close cooperation with the Vancouver School of Theology. The most visible sign, at present, is the major construction work that is taking place on our respective buildings. The new VST building, with the official grand opening scheduled for mid-November, offers a state-of-the-art educational facility. At the same time, St. Andrew's Hall is undergoing exterior rehabilitation work to ensure its continued usefulness as a residential facility and as a centre for Christian ministry for many years to come.

Even more significant than these improved facilities ➤

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is the growth of a theological faculty attuned to the needs of the church and the challenges of our culture. At this point, fully half the faculty members of VST are new within the past two years: St. Andrew's Hall has contributed significantly to this. Ross Lockhart arrived a year ago as associate professor and director of denominational formation. He focuses on evangelism and leadership, and will teach in the area of mission theology. Richard Topping, who came to Vancouver originally as the St. Andrew's Hall professor of Reformed studies, became principal of VST following the crucial interim leadership of Stephen Farris in that position. Under Topping's leadership, VST has recently added Jason Byasee and Ray Aldred to a growing roster of capable new faculty members who bring extensive pastoral experience and who are oriented to the leadership needs of the church.

St. Andrew's Hall also has launched a multi-faceted initiative called the Centre for Missional Leadership, with Ross Lockhart leading the charge as director. Programs of the CML will enhance the educational experience of theology students committed to leadership in Presbyterian churches. It will engage innovative practitioners in events and conversations where mutual learning can happen. It will encourage elders and other local church leaders to seek training that is oriented to the challenges we all face, and it will promote a theology of confident hope concerning the future of the church.

We are delighted to have the support of Dr. Darrell Guder in this effort. A leading voice in articulating a missional theology for the church and recently retired from Princeton Theological Seminary, Darrell has signed on to be our first senior fellow in residence in Vancouver on a periodic basis, starting in early 2016. In addition, we are reaching out to churches and ministry organizations throughout the so-called "Cascadia" region of the Pacific Northwest, and across Canada as well, to create a network of ministry leaders who are engaged in discovering what it means to be "missional" in the midst of our complex and challenging culture.

The most important things God wants us to discover are unlikely to be found among the ivory towers of academia, but in the congregations and locales where mission takes shape as concrete, meaningful actions that bear witness to the gospel. That is why, at St. Andrew's, we are investing our resources to enable the whole body of Christ to participate more fully and faithfully in what God is doing in the world.

Days inevitably come when we may feel engulfed by a cloud that chokes out hope and makes it hard to see a brighter future. As a pastor I have known such days, and I know I am hardly alone. When Susan and I arrived in the thick smoke of July, St. Andrew's Hall represented a welcome destination, a place to plant our feet and a fellowship of people helping us keep faith that the air would clear and blue skies would return—and indeed they did.

Figuratively speaking, St. Andrew's Hall is an educational institution that belongs to the whole church, a place that holds forth the hope of the gospel in the midst of our present cultural cloud. We have every reason to walk in hope, because our Living God is always active in pursuing God's great redemptive mission in and through the church for the sake of the world He loves. We are eager to see what God will do, and to be part of it! ●

Rev. Dr. Bob Paul is dean of St. Andrew's Hall at the Vancouver School of Theology.

THINKSTOCK

Taking a Leap of Faith

THE PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE AT 150 YEARS.

BY GLEN DAVIS

In January 1864, a momentous gathering of prominent Montreal Presbyterians, including Sir William Dawson, principal of McGill University, took place at the home of John Redpath. During this informal gathering the wheels were set in motion, apparently at the suggestion of Principal Dawson, for establishing a Presbyterian college in Montreal that would be affiliated with McGill. Present at that gathering was Rev. Donald H. MacVicar, minister of Cote Street Church. Later he was persuaded to accept the appointment as the first principal of Presbyterian College, but he did so, according to his son, "with some reluctance and with serious reservations concerning the viability of the institution to which he was committing himself."

And he had good reasons for his reluctance. Was there a sufficient number of ministerial candidates in the Montreal and Eastern Ontario region to warrant such a risky venture? Where would the money come from? Who would teach the students? Where would classes be held? Would not the wider church oppose the founding of a college that would be seen to be in competition with Knox College in Toronto?

Indeed, the project did face opposition, both from surrounding presbyteries and from the Synod of the Canada Presbyterian Church, partly because of a reluctance to support it financially, and partly because Knox College was deemed to be the only college required for the church. Brakes were applied and delays imposed, but finally a charter was procured and incorporation ratified by synod in 1865. The first class of 10 candidates began their studies in the basement of Erskine Church on Oct. 2, 1867. Keith Markell, in his history of the college, notes that, "Knox College graciously furnished its junior partner with several hundred books, mostly duplicates, which formed a nucleus of a library."

With such a humble and inauspicious beginning, who would have thought that 150 years later we would be celebrating the faithful witness and sacrificial service of more than 1,000 graduates of this college? Some are well known—James Naismith, the inventor of basketball, and John Weir Foote, recipient of the Victoria Cross—but most are not. They are the ones who simply followed a call to serve Christ in the church and in the world. They have served, and many continue to serve, in congregations across Canada, in partner churches around the globe, in rural, suburban and urban congregations, in inner-city missions, in First Nations ministries and in chaplaincies.

Today, the three colleges continue to work collaboratively, but in distinct contexts, which allows each college to form its own unique vision. While celebrating its past, Presbyterian College has also been laying out its path for the future encapsulated in the words, A Rich History—A Bold Future. The challenge that Presbyterian College faced was to identify its passion and its strengths, and apply them to the task of developing excellence in leadership for a changing ➤

church in a rapidly changing society. And that is precisely what it has done. It has developed a strategic plan with the goal of fostering such qualities as academic excellence, ministry competence, leadership formation, creativity and innovation and not least of all, a deep life of faith in the Triune God.

The college exists to serve the church and through the church, the world, so it asked the question: What are the needs of congregations today? The college has observed, along with others, that the Presbyterian Church in Canada is closing more congregations than it is starting. It has also observed that many congregations long for renewal but are unsure of how to engage in significant change. The college is responding to this by enhancing the basic M.Div. program, and providing for specialized training in both New Church Development and in congregational renewal. These are specialized ministries that require specialized training.

In addition to enhancing the present M. Div. program, the college has also established a Leadership Centre offering several unique programs. Recognizing the need to support new graduates in their early years of ministry, the college initiated a mentorship program five years ago. There are about 30 new(er) ministers participating in the program, under the leadership of five experienced mentors. About a quarter of the participants are graduates of the other colleges, and their response has been uniformly positive. One wrote, "I don't know how I would have survived my first five years without the support and encouragement of my mentorship group."

The college is bringing to Canada the highly respected Pastors of Excellence Program, supporting ministers in mid-career. The college is also committed to equipping young adults whose calling may not be in ordained ministry but who, through support and encouragement, may develop a deeper understanding of serving God in the world as well as in the church. Seeking to be global in nature and involved in the challenges of the world, the college is also committing itself to the development of international church leaders through its Face-to-Face—Faith-to-Faith Program, which focuses on equipping leaders for interfaith collaboration.

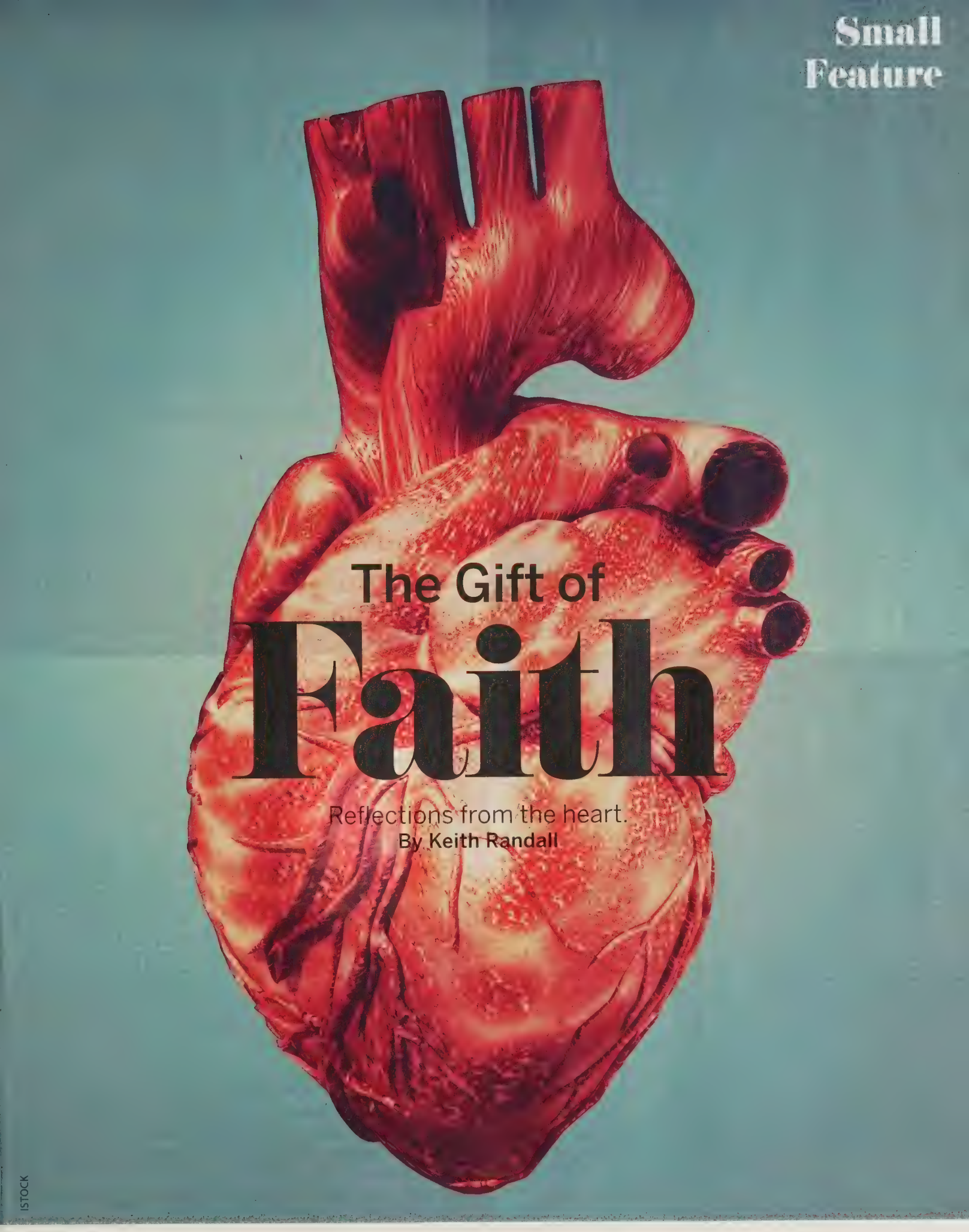
Presbyterian College continues to hold with pride the heritage of scholarly publication and excellent teaching left to it through the widely appreciated contributions of professors like Joseph McLelland, Keith Markell, Robert Cully, Fred Wisse, William Klempa and many others. It continues to make an indispensable contribution to the Montreal School of Theology, in ecumenical cooperation with the Anglican Diocesan College and the United Theological College.

As part of its 150th anniversary, Presbyterian College has embarked on a bold financial campaign under the mantra, Taking a Leap of Faith. Funds raised will support the college's new programs, and renew its facilities for the use of those who enroll in those programs. And it has published a marvelous book called *Still Voices—Still Heard*. This is a history book with a difference. Each chapter tells the story of a graduate, a teacher or a benefactor, then includes a sermon or writing by that person, and concludes with a commentary by the writer of the chapter. It makes for fascinating reading. To order, visit presbyteriancollege.ca.

What does the future hold for Presbyterian College? Long ago the odds were against a ragtag band of followers of a crucified leader. Back in 1865 the odds were against Principal MacVicar as he took on the mammoth task of leading a new Presbyterian college in the heart of Montreal. What the future holds for PC is not known, and many might still say that the odds for survival are against it. But survival is not the goal of the college. The goal of Presbyterian College is to "engage the world through congregations, one leader at a time."

Presbyterian College, its board, its faculty and its students believe in the power of the promise God makes to the creation, to remake it into all that God intends it to be. The ministry of Presbyterian College will play a part in fulfilling that promise, and your gifts and prayers can make it happen. ●

Rev. Glen Davis is director of communications and alumni relations at Presbyterian College, Montreal.



The Gift of Faith

Reflections from the heart.

By Keith Randall

ISTOCK

"I guess God's decided it's not time for you to die," said Dr. Denis Bouchard one day last August. We were in his office at the Institute de Cardiologie de Montréal/Montreal Heart Institute after he had examined my test results.

God's decided or science has decided? The first operation like mine was performed in 1960 and the process has been remarkably refined since. A couple of generations ago I would have died. I believe that it was God's grace that inspired the scientists and for that I am thankful.

The story began about three years earlier when my family doctor recommended a stress test, 12 minutes on a treadmill with electrocardiogram wires attached. The attending doctor picked up something and referred me to a cardiologist. Another test, an echocardiogram like those used for fetus photos, turned up severe aortic stenosis, a 90-per cent blockage of the aorta, the main artery that distributes blood. Because I experienced no symptoms except the slow diminution of strength we often attribute to aging, the cardiologist suggested that an operation be delayed for as long as possible.

Another stress test last spring led to an angiogram, during which a thin, dye-filled catheter is studied by x-ray, and the proposal to operate within six months. As I had recently solicited proposals from five retailers for a new computer, I thought it useful to shop around for something far more important. Through a member of our extended family, I was referred to Dr. Bouchard.

Created in 1954, the MHI is one of North America's most respected cardio centers. Dr. Bouchard has directed the cardiac surgery program since 2008 and has operated on more than 3,000 patients, so I'm neither the first nor the last. One of the specialties he has helped pioneer is minimally invasive surgery which, for aortic valve replacement, involves a small incision in the upper-right chest rather than cutting through the sternum, use of instruments resembling long chopsticks, less pain and quicker recovery.

Meeting with my wife and me in September, Dr. Bouchard had noted a 50 per cent blockage of an obtuse circumflex artery in the heart. The aorta problem was due to natural calcium build-up, the artery issue more likely related to beer, pizza and wings. As the doctor explained things, I thought of the psalmist: how wonderfully are we knit together in our mothers' wombs. Although not

A couple of generations ago I would have died. I believe that it was God's grace that inspired the scientists and for that I am thankful

requiring immediate surgery, we agreed that the artery be bypassed at the same time, leading to the sternum entry and a three-month recovery at home.

I awaited the impending operation with confidence. I expected to feel awful for a few days then recover fully and even better. Indeed, Dr. Bouchard promised an additional 20 yards on my tee shots. Better a plumbing problem, I thought, than other health related horrors.

I entered hospital on November 5 last year and was operated on the following morning. Of course, I remember nothing of the procedure but well remember three days in intensive care. Deep in confused sleepless nights, I thought prayer would be a good idea but God's line seemed to be busy. Maybe it was the drugs. If my fate was to endure such suffering for a year before an inevitable ending, I'd probably reconsider my general opposition to physician-assisted suicide and hoped instead that I'd have the quiet courage to volunteer for some advanced research project.

For reading, I had a book lent by our minister, Rev. Jeff Veenstra, featuring the transcription of the famed dialogue between distinguished theologians John Dominic Crossan and N.T. Wright, followed by eight commentaries by theologians and philosophers. Pretty heavy stuff for the occasion, but resurrection seemed a fitting theme.

Without going into mind-numbing detail, Wright supports a thesis of Jesus' physical resurrection and Crossan the concept of a metaphorical return. The commentators agree with one or both to greater or lesser degrees. If the brightest kids in the class can't figure it out, what are we bozos in the back row supposed to do?

Faced with the gift of life that has been offered me, I am cheered that these two in the end agree. Bishop Wright says: "... the resurrection stories in the Gospels do not say that Jesus is raised, therefore we're going to heaven or therefore we're going to be raised. They say Jesus is raised, therefore God's new creation has begun and we've got a job to do." And Dominic Crossan writes in a closing essay: "... believers are living the resurrected life that incarnates the nonviolent God of justice and peace who was revealed in Christ. We are not waiting for God to act. God has already acted and is waiting for us to react, to collaborate, to cooperate, to get with the divine program."

In other words, Jesus is not just about believing; Jesus is about doing. I'll have to keep that in mind in the years ahead.

REV. VEENSTRA HAD SUGGESTED a Lenten study series based on the dialogue. Gerbern Oegema, a professor of religious studies at McGill, and I developed one.

A few days after my operation, Jeff had entered hospital for a routine operation. Doctors found cancer and by Easter he lay dying. I visited him a few days before he entered palliative care and he asked how the series was going. I told him of the views of Wright and Crossan quoted above.

"I'm surprised they'd say that," he said with a smile. "The Christian promise is so much more than that. We're promised everlasting life in a new spiritual body. When you get there, I'll be waiting. You won't recognize me, but I'll be there."

"I'll recognize you," I told my frequent golfing buddy. "You'll still be hitting those 280-yard hooks into the woods."

I saw him once or twice again and now he's gone. I'm left thankful for the gift of a faith so far beyond anything I'd ever grasped before. *Au revoir, mon ami. À la prochaine.*

Keith Randall is a freelance writer in Montreal.

ON THE ROAD

Meeting refugees as they search for their future.

Story and photos by Andrew Faiz

She asks me to call her Mahad. That's not her name. She's afraid for her family in Syria. Like so many others I meet, she wants very much to tell her story. Her story is all she has right now.

I am taking photographs when I meet her and her family. She had stopped to take her puffer. "How long is this walk?" she asks in a crisp, slightly accented English.

She wears a hijab and a yellow bomber jacket to ward off the raw September wind whipping around us. She is with her husband and their daughter, as well as her sister and son. They are exhausted, carrying their worldly possessions in a few backpacks.

As we get to know each other over the course of the next hour, Mahad apologetically tells me her real name. But she insists if I was to write her story, I use Mahad.

Mahad had a 24-year-old son in university. He got involved in student politics and made comments about the government. He disappeared. She was asked after a while to identify him at a hospital. She never did find a body but was given a document confirming he was dead.

Sometime before that, her brother-in-law was also killed, leaving behind a widow and child.

Mahad's husband is Palestinian. That was not an issue in Syria until ›

Laden with all their belongings, a couple share an intimate moment at Hegyeshalom, Hungary, steps from Austria.

Mahad, far right in yellow, with her husband and daughter. To the left, her sister and son. Missing from this family portrait are Mahad's son and brother-in-law, both dead in Syria.

recently. Now Palestinians are considered dirty and dangerous. The family lived in constant fear.

They left Syria 16 days before I met them. They had been to Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia. They want to reach Sweden. They have a friend there; they have a feeling for it. Of course they would love to come to Canada, but that seems impossible.

THE TRAIN IS SUPPOSED TO ARRIVE AT 10, then noon, then one. Each time, police officers line the tracks, wait, get the word and leave. It is a cool September day; standing outside is uncomfortable.

My hosts, Hungarian Interchurch Aid, are also busy working the phones, talking to their contacts from the entry border at Croatia. The train left, the train is delayed. It is a silent ballet, the police, the media and the NGOs stepping on the platform, waiting, and then back to the café or car for warmth.

A little after one, the train arrives, gliding quietly on the tracks of Hegyeshalom, Hungary, near the Austrian border. A reporter, a couple of television crews and a few photographers take their positions between the police.

As the passengers disembark the cold breeze hits them. They look confused. They ask, "Is this Austria?" No, no it's not. You're still in Hungary.

An eight-year-old boy with no shoes or jacket gets off and waits for his family. An older man steps down with a wheelchair, then back on the train to get an old woman in black. He places her in the chair as other members of the family gather the children and the bags. There are lots of children, lots of bags.

First the backpack slung over the shoulder, then the toddler on the shoulder, then a stuffed plastic bag or two for each hand. Young men, the ones without children, in inappropriate shoes and wispy thin jackets, run ahead. Followed by couples, holding onto each other, precariously balancing their belongings.

The families with confused and tired children, laden with packs, behind. Cabin after cabin after cabin emptying; a kilometre-long pedestrian train extends through the town to a highway. The police guide them wordlessly towards the half-hour trek of three and a half kilometres to the border.

There are about 2,000 people on this train, mostly from Syria, but also from Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan. They had managed through Croatia to the Hungarian border, perhaps spent some time in a camp there; they had been frisked and hastily placed on a train. The police at the entry border were curt and rough. The police at the exit border are quiet and occasionally helpful.

I walk with this stream of refugees, taking pictures, engaging in conversations, playing peek-a-boo with a toddler on his daddy's shoulders. The father turns to me and beams. He speaks no English. His wife and another child keep pace with his long strides.

It occurs to me that none of these people really know where they are going. I know only their next stop, down the road, but beyond that nobody knows where they are headed. They are all running away from something without any sense of what they are running towards. They have vague hopes—better life, opportunity for children—which they have packed amongst their meagre belongings.

NOW PALESTINIANS ARE CONSIDERED DIRTY AND DANGEROUS

THE FAMILY LIVED IN CONSTANT FEAR

I AM IN HUNGARY accompanying Rev. Karen Horst, Moderator of this year's General Assembly, on her international trip. It was organized months in advance before this region began to be featured in headlines for the seemingly endless lines of refugees passing through. Travelling with us is Rev. Rick Horst, a former moderator, and Rev. Glynis Williams, associate secretary of International Ministries. Dr. David Pandy-Szekeres, PCC mission staff, is our host and driver.

The purpose of the trip is to experience the mission work being done on behalf of the Presbyterian Church. Variations on these trips happen regularly. But, as the refugee crisis increases, Pandy-Szekeres amends the agenda.

The story changes quickly. During the half day it takes us to fly to Budapest, Hungary closes its borders with Serbia, builds a fence and empties a refugee camp. We have to improvise the agenda; Pandy-Szekeres works his contacts, deeply developed over his decades in Europe.

We drive for nearly three hours to the empty refugee camp at Röszke, south of the border city of Szeged. Nearby at the border crossing are a couple dozen international media. A British journalist is walking around asking if anybody could give him a ride to Budapest. He is stranded without a crew or a taxi. A Croatian journalist jokes, "Welcome to nowhere."

Less than a kilometre away, across from a heavily guarded border crossing, we are told, are several thousand refugees on the Serbian side. The Croatian journalist says his contacts on the Serbian side are telling him the refugees are confused and frustrated.

Just a day earlier this border crossing was open. They don't know what to do. There is a rumour the thousands might push through the border block regardless of military threats. Several international TV crews have set cameras pointing at the border, waiting for something to happen.

Pandy-Szekeres has a friend on the Serbian side.

IN MAGYYARKANIZSA, a Serbian border district with a largely ethnic Hungarian population, we meet with local municipal leaders. They are overwhelmed, they tell us. Thousands pass through their villages every day. The locals are out to support them, provide them water, food, clothing, what they can. But they do not have the infrastructure to maintain the care. The municipalities have been congratulated by federal and European Union authorities without significant financial support.

One of the greatest concerns, of course, is sanitation. The refugees need washrooms but there aren't enough to support the numbers. And it is a matter of numbers; there are thousands each day.

As the sun begins to set, we are escorted by these municipal authorities to a refugee camp. It is dark now. We park and walk by a tuck shop. There are abandoned clothes and garbage in a gully. As we enter the camp, there is a Wi-Fi station with some computers. A few dozen metres ›

into the camp are rows of large open tents lined with cots, filled with people and lit with the glow of smartphones.

I spot Glynis Williams talking to a young woman. Soon the woman's family joins us. They want to tell their story. Between Williams and me our Arabic is non-existent. But that family of seven has just enough English for us to hold a slow conversation.

They left Turkey 15 days earlier; they have travelled through Bala, Greece, then Samoa, Athens, Macedonia, Belgrade and are now at the Serbian camp. They are headed to Sweden where there is a friend.

The father, Hussein al Monsour, 47, has shrapnel down his left side. He was a baker by trade, though in his broken English he says, "bread technician." When you only have a few handfuls of words to express yourself, you go with the ones that make you look best and are nearest to your intention.

"Syria good country. Syria dead. Syria all gone," al Monsour tells us. He speaks of the bombs and the hopelessness.

When I tell him I am from Canada he proudly brings forth his eldest daughter Wotran, 19, saying she speaks French. In our brief attempt at an exchange it is clear to me Wotran has only a few more French words than I have Arabic.

It is desperate hopefulness, a pooling of resources, collecting their strengths. A little English, a little French, a little technical knowledge, a little skill set, a lot of hope, a great deal of hope for a future beyond a dead country.

A beautiful family of seven—dad, Hussein, and mom, Wadha Issa, children, Wotran, Guru, 17, Bian, 15, Ahmed, 12, and Majid, 10. All smiles.

The smiles surprise me. It is only later, only after meeting many more, after meeting Mahad and her family, that I understand what that is. It is hope. Perhaps wishfulness. They are together, on a journey.

As we talk, two more buses filled with people arrive. And shortly after that, another three. An endless stream of families like the al Monsours; technicians and craftspeople, professionals, the big mass of the Syrian middle class, bombed and beaten from their lives, on the road to a new home.

The next morning there are stories that the refugees broke through the border crossing into Hungary. There are water cannons and tear gas. The people are collected and sent by train to the Austrian border.

I wonder what happened to the al Monsours; but they are now lost in the overwhelming waves of the desperate. I pray they find a home someplace, but I know it won't be for years yet.

THEY HAVE VAGUE HOPES—BETTER LIFE, OPPORTUNITY FOR CHILDREN— WHICH THEY HAVE PACKED AMONGST THEIR MEAGRE BELONGINGS

THERE ARE AN ESTIMATED seven million displaced Syrians within Syria—refugees in their own country. (Various reports range from 6.5 million to nearly 8 million.) Another 2.1 million Syrians have been registered by the UNHCR, the United Nations' refugee agency, in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon. Nearly two million Syrians have been registered in Turkey. And another 24,000 in North Africa.

Syria's population in 2011 was 23 million. Given the total of the numbers above, half of the country's population is on the run.

Half of them are under the age of 18. About three per cent over the age of 60. About a fifth under the age of four.

Between April and August this year there were 428,735 asylum applications by Syrians in Europe. (By comparison, there were 138,016 last year.) Over 50,000 refugees entered Hungary in August alone; there were less than 3,000 two years earlier.

The reigning theory seems to be that it started in Turkey. It might have been spring; it might have been Turkey's renewed focus on fighting the Kurds, which was instigated by an attack from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. It might just have been that people were fed up and tired. The situation in Syria is not getting better, Turkish refugee camps while praised by UNHCR for being well run are also over run. People get tired of waiting and tired of being penned.

That was the first wave of refugees; some trying the

The al Monsour family. Fifteen days on the road, and spending a night at least at a refugee camp in Serbia. Their faces tell their story.

water crossing to Greece, others a land route, also through Greece. Those were the earliest stories of over-laden boats.

The tragedies on water, along with reports of unscrupulous smugglers, forced a change of direction to land routes.

The refugees I met during the last two weeks of September came by land, through Turkey, Greece, Macedonia. Some told stories of smugglers; most travelled on their own wits following crowds.

A misunderstood statement by German Chancellor Angela Merkel that her nation could handle a million refugees was heard as "would." Word spread that Germany was open to asylum seekers.

This gave birth to another wave, which further confused and complicated public opinions. Suddenly it wasn't just Syrians, but also Pakistanis, Iranians, Iraqis, Afghanis and others from failed or continuously depressed states. I met many of them in Hungary.

Reza, a 24-year-old man from Afghanistan, has been living in Iran. There is no work, and no opportunity for education. He has a secondary school diploma. He taught himself English and even taught it in Iran for a while. He decided to leave his sister and parents in Iran and strike out to find his future.

Abdul Rahman, 39, is from Lahore, with children and a seamstress wife. There is no work in Pakistan for him. He'd been a retail salesman for nearly three decades. He certainly had the easy charm of a salesman. He left his family behind, with meagre savings, hoping to settle in Italy where he thinks he has a chance of getting his papers.

Still, the overwhelming numbers are from Syria. I took a quick photo of a group of eight 20-somethings. They had hot chai in hand and were a little over a hundred metres from the Austrian border. They didn't know each other in Syria; they had met on the journey. They formed a travelling group. When I tried to engage them in conversation, they all laughed. "You know the story. You know our story. Syria is hell. The bombs. There is nothing there for us." They turned and headed for the next country.

They hadn't come from the Turkish camps. But something compelled them to finally leave. Perhaps it was Merkel's statement; perhaps it was the overwhelming ›

Don't let the smiles fool you. This impromptu travelling troupe of young Syrians met on the road, supporting each other. Enjoying a warm chai they say, "Syria is hell. There is nothing there for us."

response after The Photograph of Alan Kurdi, a three-year-old boy, dead face down on a Turkish beach.

The Kurdi family (the family name differs in some accounts) were from Kobani, on the Syrian-Turkish border. Caught in various skirmishes the family moved around, escaping ISIL and other forces. They were in Turkey for three years, then went home, only to have ISIL return with bombs. With distant hope of immigration to Canada via an aunt in Vancouver, the family tried to get out of Syria and Turkey. They managed on their third attempt.

A dinghy with twice the recommended numbers capsized quickly. It was meant to be a 30-minute water route to Greece; it ended tragically in five. Alan along with his brother and mother died. And suddenly a large story that had been playing on the news for months had a human face.

Rev. Glynis Williams founded Action Réfugiés Montréal 21 years ago. She wrote about Iraqi refugees in Syria for the *Record* in 2008, winning a prestigious award for her work. She told me she has not seen such a compassionate response to refugees and asylum seekers in four decades since Canadian hearts opened to those from Southeast Asia. Advocates like her have been talking about refugee issues for a very long time, but it was that photograph of Alan Kurdi that turned the hearts of many Canadians.

HEGYESHALOM IS NO STRANGER TO REFUGEES. Many Hungarians passed through the same border in 1956, into Austria and beyond.

On the day I met Mahad and her family there, over 5,000 people passed by from three trainloads. They stopped briefly on the Hungarian side, after the walk, where they were met by NGOs providing food, water, shoes and clothes.

One of them was Hungarian Interchurch Aid, an ecumenical relief and development agency with programming across the country for refugees, including daycares at camps. I was blessed to have them as my hosts, not only for their charming company but also for the unique access a Christian relief agency has, by the status of their hard work, in many parts of the world.

This particular border is essentially inactive, since

Hungary is a Schengen country, an inter-European Union grouping, along with Austria, with borders that are open to each other. Still this was once an active border, with an attached building. Dozens of volunteers busily prepare sandwiches all day for the refugees.

Once a trainload arrives, the station is controlled mayhem for an hour or so. Hungry, poorly dressed, stressed and anxious, people go through the various tables, taking food and trying on shoes and jackets.

Once the refugees have gone through, the volunteers get busy with brooms and garbage bags, picking up discarded items, food waste and other refuse. They return to the building and make more sandwiches, stack more water and fruit. It's a long day for a volunteer.

THESE ARE NOT PEASANT REFUGEES AND PERHAPS THAT IS WHY THEY ARE BEING PAINTED IN SOME WESTERN MEDIA AS OPPORTUNISTIC

THERE HAS BEEN DEBATE IN THE WESTERN MEDIA whether to call these people refugees or migrants. There is truth in either title; but the debate masks the greater truth: None of these people feel they have a future in their birth country. They have abandoned everything—family, culture, history, property, nationalism—to take a chance. Just a chance. Is the English teacher who lost her son and her brother-in-law in imminent danger of her own life? That is impossible to speculate. But one feels she has lost something dear to her soul. Only then could she leave her history behind her.

There have been reports these refugees have been using smartphones and are directed by Facebook pages and websites. Firstly, the whole world uses smartphones and free, accessible Wi-Fi. Secondly, there is no confirmation there is any organized centralized website or forum that is directing people. There are myriad Facebook pages and websites, the majority of them personal, a handful of them by advocacy groups.

What all this suggests, and perhaps that is what is challenging many in the West, is that in the best of circumstances these people would be middle class. They certainly are sophisticated and smart. If not all formally educated, they are intelligent and have access to ready news and information.

These are not peasant refugees and perhaps that is why they are being painted in some Western media as opportunistic. That may not be inaccurate, but it should also not be used as a critique.

The first Christian response is to make certain they are clothed and fed. That is the Good Samaritan response. The subsequent response is more complicated. Germany has committed six billion euros to house, feed and educate a million people. Not every Western country is ready or desiring of that commitment. And while the debate continues as to where these people will end up, one thing is certain: there are many more of them in Syria, across parts of Africa, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iran and Iraq, plus the ones still interned in Turkey, and they want their future.

REV. AARON STEVENS, senior minister at St. Columba Scottish Church, Budapest, acknowledges that many people have been very helpful and caring over the past summer.

"Hungarians saw these refugees at the train station and wondered what was going on. They asked them questions. They saw the registration documents in Hungarian. That was just ordinary people making human connections.

"On Friday morning, what I like to call The Friday because it was the largest grouping before the refugees were moved along and the borders were closed, it was very, very quiet at the Keleti train station. That is not normally a quiet place. But, the refugees were sleeping and the people going to work kept very quiet to let them rest.

"It is always a matter of human connections. Wherever there are these connections there are opportunities for people to get to know each other and overcome their fears. But, what the government is doing, with closing the borders, and the fence, is reduce the opportunities for any future human connections."

Stevens is an American. He has lived in Hungary for 22 years, first as an English teacher, and the past 10 as senior minister at the English-speaking Presbyterian church.

His congregation at St. Columba converted their sanctuary space into an overnight hostel for refugees. Stevens is convinced this refugee advocacy has increased the number of people coming to worship and participating in the ›

They hold on to each other with toddlers and packs, their hopeful dreams of a better future packed along with their few belongings.

church. "I think people are impressed by a congregation being the church in the world. And I am happy to tell all ministers about this."

Pastor Istvan Zalatnay's congregation is comprised of Romanians of Hungarian descent who themselves were refugees in the 1990s. They have committed a tenth of their budget to "mitigating the suffering of people in increasingly difficult situations; helping the local communities carrying most of the burdens." In a press release they asked for help from, "'Right-wing people' who are generous when they feel it makes sense; and, 'Left-wing people' who want to offer their help along realistic conditions."

Zalatnay's tongue-in-cheek release cuts through the ideological cant. Like most Hungarians he too is conflicted about his country's ability to absorb Middle-Eastern refugees. He has not worked that out for himself because he is engaged in the primary response. Be the Good Samaritan—feed them, clothe them, comfort them.

ABOUT 10 DAYS AFTER I MET MAHAD, after I had returned home, I called her brother. He told me his two sisters, his brother-in-law, niece and nephew were fine. They had arrived at a refugee camp in Switzerland three days earlier. They still have a few countries to cross before Sweden, but for now they receive three meals a day and are able to rest. He did not know if they would continue immediately to their final destination or remain in the camp longer. (The weather is turning colder, of course.) For now he is happy they are in a safe place.

He communicates with them regularly via Viber and WhatsApp, two Wi-Fi-based, Skype-like, phone applications. They have no phone number, but they don't need one. They're in the middle of nowhere, between their past and their future, connected by a thin sliver of technology.

The last I saw of Mahad, the family was walking towards Austria. She turned around to wave goodbye. I asked her, "What is your favourite song?"

"I like that *Titanic* song," she said. "My Heart Will Go On."

Andrew Faiz is the Record*'s senior editor.*

FROM THE MODERATOR

Meeting Refugees

Getting to know the stranger and their struggles. By Karen Horst

Often we are experts on subjects until we are directly involved. Whether it was parenting, our first job or the first time we experienced grief, we thought we knew all the answers until we were engaged in the real experience. I travelled to Hungary, Ukraine and Romania in September for my Moderator's trip. We had been reading in the press about the unfolding humanitarian crisis centred at that time in Hungary and we formed certain opinions. They quickly washed away as we spent time with the refugees fleeing their homelands by the thousands and as we met with local communities trying to cope with this challenge.

Upon my return, I have been startled by the sweeping generalizations people continue to make. Some suggest that this is a terrorist plot. Others comment that migrants with cell phones and the ability to pay smugglers should not qualify as refugees. Others suggest that the young men pouring out to find a safe place for their families are just economic opportunists. They should be staying at home to fight. We are such "experts" when we are miles away from the crisis!

On our very first day, we drove down to the border crossing between Hungary and Serbia. Earlier that day, Hungary had closed its border. Before the day was over we had spent time with the refugees in a temporary camp and also talked to representatives of a town called Subotica who have been dealing with the thousands of people crossing the border.

We came to understand the complexity of the crisis in a whole new way

We came to understand the complexity of the crisis in a whole new way. We experienced the heartache of those who were attempting to provide immediate aid by offering tents, blankets, food, water and Wi-Fi. We appreciated anew how cell phones are the lifeline for refugees as they communicate with family back home and with one another to determine new routes to Germany and other sites. We began to understand Hungary's desire to contain its borders given the huge numbers attempting to flow through their land and their frustration with the open invitation that Germany had first extended but was now modifying.

I spent time with a group of young men from Syria. One told me of having to pay $3,500 to a smuggler to be put on an overcrowded boat and sent out without a guide. He watched as one man was shot by the smuggler and died in the boat in spite of the efforts of the refugees to help him. This young man walked for 15 hours hoping to find safety only to arrive at the Hungarian border just hours after it was closed. He described what it was like at home. He told of the daily barrage of bullets and bombs from a variety of sources. Between ISIS, Asad's army, freedom fighters and other nations participating in the war, his siblings and mother continue to live in constant fear. He named his confusion, hurt and disappointment that an invitation had been retracted and now he was trapped in a temporary camp with the temperatures dropping and no sense of what to do next. As we were leaving, we watched several more buses pull into the camp, each one stuffed full with new arrivals. All ages stumbled out weary and frightened. The very next day some of the refugees tried to push through the border fence and were met with tear gas and water cannons. ›

WESLEY BATES/3INABOX

Final Thoughts

Rev. Karen Horst speaks with a young man at a refugee camp in Serbia.

Many church leaders we met, like Dora Kanizsai-Nagy of St. Columba Scottish Church in Budapest and Dr. Istavan Zalatnay, a pastor of the Reformed church, indicated their commitment to the refugees. They refuse to get caught up in the battle over definitions of who are migrants, asylum seekers or refugees. They refuse to be distracted by the numbers pouring through each day. They were determined to be advocates for people seeking a safer and better life. They refuse to see the migrants as only Muslims since the crowds rushing in were not only from Syria but also Nigeria, Pakistan, Iraq and Afghanistan. They are very informed regarding the struggles that the EU governments are facing in dealing with the impact of these numbers yet they consciously choose to honour Christ in caring for those who need food, clothing and water.

It is easy to make assumptions and consider this to be a European problem. But as a nation we Canadians need to step up to the plate to assist people fleeing from a battle in which we are engaged. Obviously the best solution is to resolve the conflict in Syria but in the meantime we can help those who have left behind everything to try and find a safer home. We can participate in refugee sponsorship. Millions are displaced and sitting in refugee camps. We can make a concerted effort to challenge our government and our local MPs to be more generous in opening the doors to refugees and to streamline the process for applications and screening. Many of us have parents and grandparents who migrated from other lands, helping to form the Cana-

Obviously the best solution is to resolve the conflict in Syria but in the meantime we can help those who have left behind everything to try and find a safer home

da we know today. This is our chance to welcome the stranger as many of our families experienced in this land years ago.

Let's dare to risk really knowing refugees instead of making assumptions about them. It should be natural for us to be in solidarity with people who have had to leave their homes and travel to a safer land; even Mary and Joseph had to flee to protect their infant son. We know what would have happened if they stayed.

The refugees we met were simply seeking a place of peace and safety and a new opportunity to work to support their families. They long for a new hope and secure future. Yes, the problem is complex and yes, there is a need to be wise in our efforts but in the end, the refugee knocking on our door could be our Saviour calling us to care for the strangers in our midst.

Rev. Karen Horst is minister at St. Andrew's, Orillia, Ont.

People & Places

Find more online at presbyterianrecord.ca

Photographs can be uploaded at presbyterianrecord.ca.

MONCTON, N.B.
The Ontario Presbyterian Chorus did a 12-day tour of the Maritimes this June, spreading the gospel through music. You can read all about the trip on the People and Places section of our website.

WEST VANCOUVER, VANCOUVER, B.C.
When Ian Loudon (left) was retiring as treasurer at West Vancouver Presbyterian, the congregation thought he deserved a card as big as his commitment. He served as treasurer for over 60 years. It wasn't six uninterrupted decades, mind you—he stepped aside twice to let someone else fill that role, but when they moved on and he was asked to take up the task again he always did it gladly. With Ian are his wife, May Loudon, and Rev. Glenn Inglis, minister.

CAPE BRETON UNIVERSITY, SYDNEY, N.S.
Rev. Dr. Roberta Clare (right) is a familiar face for many. She served as director of the Elders' Institute at St. Andrew's Hall, Vancouver, for 11 years. Although Clare has moved on, she wanted to express her gratitude to Presbyterians across the country and say: "It was a joy and honour to serve with you." Here she is with then-colleague Kathleen Bolton at the 2010 General Assembly in Sydney, N.S. Thanks for your fantastic ministry, Roberta!

THE OTHER SIX DAYS

Party Like a Presbyterian

The Church is alive, active, vibrant and odd. By Bradley Childs

Jon Barnes is a doctoral student, Loyola grad, and former Orthodox Presbyterian Church youth pastor now living in Ellicott City, Maryland, a small community just outside Baltimore. Barns is on Twitter, he's got a largely inactive blog (as of 2013), he's a contributor to sermonspice.com (which provides video sermon illustrations for a small fee). On his YouTube channel he has made a bit of a splash with tutorial videos generally relating to drawing cars and other things auto-related. He has knife reviews (yep, you read that correctly) as well as how-tos of all kinds. He's a speaker and author and consultant on church communications and a lot more. So why is Barnes on this list? And why is Jon Barnes the only thing in a column that usually includes a list of four distinct things of interest?

Well, the reason for that is simple. After eight years I'm out of ideas! No... honestly, I found this video of some music he did and I was both confounded by it and simultaneously love it. Moreover, I didn't know what to do with it. Is it satire? It is kitsch? Is it serious? I had no clue! But I loved it. Then I saw the video on his YouTube channel titled "How to share your faith" and wanted to use that in the column. Then I found the one titled "Rejected online dating submissions" and wanted that one. They are all worth posting. But if I'm honest, the real gem is that first music video I saw and was dumbfounded by. It's called "Party Like a Presbyterian." And I just had to get a hold of him to find out just what it's all about. I'll let him respond below in his own words:

"Here's how the Party Like a Presbyterian thing came to be: Years ago there was a famous song, 'Party Like a Rockstar' by Shop Boyz. I have no idea who they are or what that song's about (partying apparently), but I love mashing unexpected things together and in an instant, thought how funny it would be to create a parody song, 'Party Like a Presbyterian.' The lyrics flowed effortlessly, the song came together with the magic of GarageBand and my Snowball Mic, and my good friend who actually is a professional musician did the mastering.

Is it satire?
It is kitsch?
Is it serious?
I had no clue!
But I loved it

"Here's the substance of my prankery. Colliding hip-hop and Presbyterians together is funny because it's an unexpected mix. 'Presbyterians' (I count myself among them), are not known for our partying yet because of our understanding of the gospel, we actually are wildly free to party if we want to—we realize the radical freedom the existentialists only imagined because through the disciplines and the Word we, like the Psalmist says in Psalm 119:32, 'can run in the path of His commands.' So, by way of pursuing radical freedom in the gospel, we're free to make fun of ourselves, free to enjoy the life we have, free to discipline ourselves unto Godliness. In some weird way, this is what my song and website are meant to accomplish."

Now if you are a fan of this silly little column you know exactly why I have done this strange thing in devoting the entire thing to one person this month. This guy *is* The Other Six Days. The whole point of this column is that the Church exists as a people outside the Sunday service; that we are engaged in the world, that the Church is alive and vibrant and odd and active outside those two tiny hours we gather together.

Maybe I'm crazy but this goofy, ridiculous, insane, embarrassingly-wonderful little song is not only worth a buck or too but is also a great reminder that we are in the world but not of it and we are the living, breathing Church alive in the world.

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Rev. Bradley Childs is minister at First, Regina.

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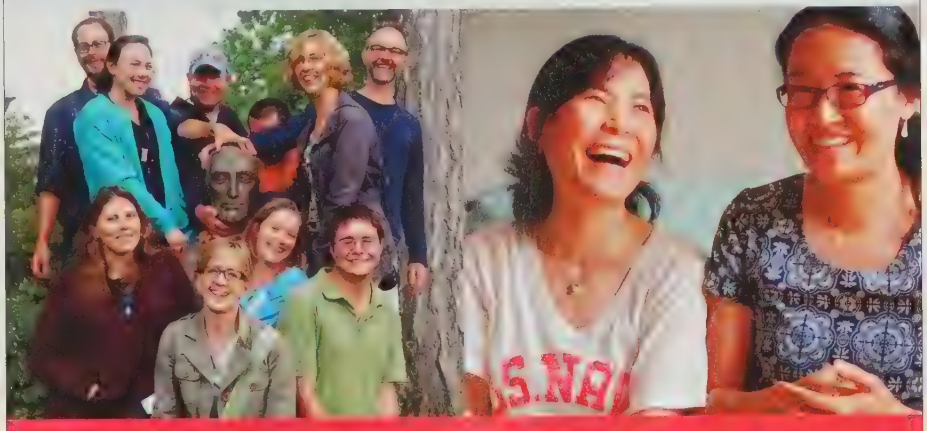

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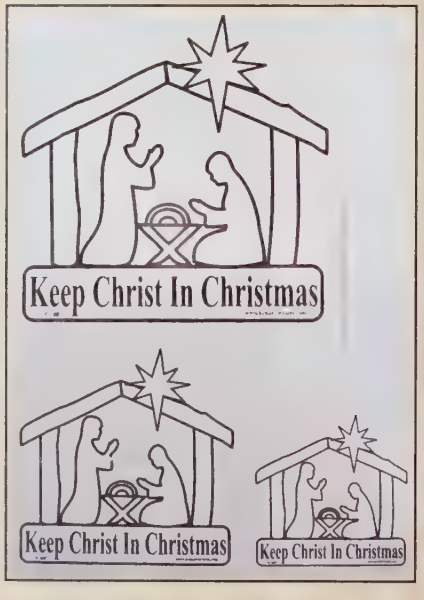

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FOR THE JOURNEY

A Wandering Arminian was my Grandfather

Are you doing your duty? By David Webber

A wandering Arminian was my grandfather (with apologies to Deuteronomy 26:5). He was a devout Methodist and was well on his way to becoming an ordained Methodist missionary like his father before him when the seminary terminated its relationship with him before he could graduate. Apparently it involved a lightbulb, India ink and some part of the anatomy of the dean's son, a person Grandfather held was a bit of a sycophantic snitch. And so Grandfather, whom I know felt a real duty and a call to serve Christ in the mission field, was expelled from seminary for a childish prank. His expulsion caused deep disappointment in the heart of his missionary father and the whole Methodist family, something that was, in a small way I hope, revenged when I surprised everyone including myself by graduating from the same continuing seminary 75 years later, albeit as a devout Calvinist rather than an Arminian.

And so Grandfather became a bit of a footloose wanderer for a time, working for the Kaslo Slocan Railroad and the sawmills and silver mines in the New Denver, Sandon and Silverton areas of the Kootenays in B.C. But it did not last. Duty reared its head and Grandfather marched off to the Great War exactly 100 years ago this month.

Like most Canadians who bravely marched off to France, the First World War began for him in 1915 not 1914. I suppose it took that long for enlistment, training and mobilization to happen for many men. One thing is for sure though, the reality of trench warfare had fully come home by 1915 and the men who were signing up by mid-1915 knew well the horror that awaited them. But they went anyway, in droves, many out of a deep sense of duty if not adventure.

According to official Canadian service records and the 54th Battalion historical records, Private Frederick Vickery Webber enlisted on June 13, 1915, sailed with his battalion aboard the *RMS Saxonia* on November 22, 1915, and arrived in England eight days later. After more training, the 54th Battalion joined the 4th Canadian Division, 11th Infantry Brigade in France on August 13, 1916. The 54th was in the thick of the conflict for the duration of the war, and was awarded battle honours at the Somme, Ancre Heights, Vimy Ridge, Hill 70, Ypres, Passchendaele, Scarpe, Drocourt-Queant, Canal du Nord, Valenciennes and Sambre. Grandfather and the bulk of the 54th Kootenay Battalion were demobilized on June 13, 1919 in Revelstoke, B.C., after four hard years of service. According to the 54th Battalion records, there were 775 lives lost, and 1,909 wounded out of the 4,391 men who served in its ranks during those years.

My recent retirement has gifted me with some extra time to research histories of individual members of my family going back a hundred years and more. As I have, two things keep cropping up: the obvious deep sense of duty that ›

ILLUSTRATION: BARRY FALLS

people seemed to have in those days, as well as a commitment to a calling on one's life. It seems to stand in stark contrast to my own sense of duty and calling, which like many in my society, seems rather pale and flabby compared to people a hundred years ago, more of a duty to self than anything else. With a revisionist view of history one can perhaps find all kinds of fault with what was done out of a sense of duty and calling in those long ago days, but one cannot find much in this day and age to compare with people's abiding sense of selfless duty and faith to family and country and, to the point of this story, to Christ and his church.

So as I look at my grandfather who gave of himself to serve his country through two world wars and never was able to scrape together enough money to own even a single grain of its soil during his lifetime; at my great-grandfather who gave of himself serving Christ and the people of the rugged coast and mountains of B.C. as a Methodist missionary and who lies in an unmarked indigent's grave in this country's soil somewhere in Kamloops, B.C.; and at my great-great-grandmother who gave herself to her country and family, having and raising 10 children in 16 years to fuel the appetites of her nation's rampant industrialism; as I look at them with all of their deep sense of duty lived out in selfless and costly ways, it causes me to look at my own life and ask a very simple and searching question: What is my duty and am I willingly doing it?

For me the context of this question ends up being completely connected to my faith in Jesus as it is lived out in and through his church in Canada. That's just who I am and where I live. When I ask the question in this context, I have to drag the question through scripture. And when I do this, of all the possibilities, I find myself compelled to consider a candid saying of Jesus in the Gospel of John.

Jesus is asked a simple question by a bunch of folks who have just experienced what is often called the feeding of the 5,000. They really want to follow him because of what they experienced and so they ask: "What must we do to do the works God requires?" It's a stark and simple question. Boiled down, it really is asking, "If we follow you Jesus, what is our duty?" Jesus' answer is simple and without guile: "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent" (John 6:28–29).

That question and answer have often haunted me. What is my duty in following Jesus and doing the works of God? Jesus says, 'Believe in me.' That seems to be such a nebulous thing, perhaps an easy thing, too. But as I reflect on believing in Jesus as a sense of duty—selfless duty like a person going over the top numerous times into deadly machine gun fire, cannon fire and poisonous gas, or a person daily sailing off on a tiny boat into the deadly maritime waters of British Columbia's Pacific coast to proclaim the gospel to a few lonely folks in completely isolated communities, or a woman entering into a relationship to risk her life in childbirth 10 or more times in as many years—well I think I begin to get the picture. What Jesus seems to be saying to me is, if I am interested in following him and doing the works of God then I must be prepared to lose myself in believing in him; believing in who he is, in what he teaches, in how he lives and imitating it with my life. Be prepared to do my duty. And that's no small thing. It amounts to a lifelong challenge every day of my life.

Rev. David Webber is retired from the Cariboo ministry in B.C. Order his fourth book, When the Aspen Flowers, *through webberink@telus.net.*

"Prayer, its opal walls polished to transparency
by the centuries of hands that have touched them,
is the Tabernacle realized and the wayside chapel utilized.
Ever travelling as we travel, moving as we move,
prayer grips like home, until the heart belongs nowhere else
and the body can scarcely function apart from them both.
Prayer is dangerous and the entrance way to wholeness."

—PHYLLIS TICKLE (1934-2015)

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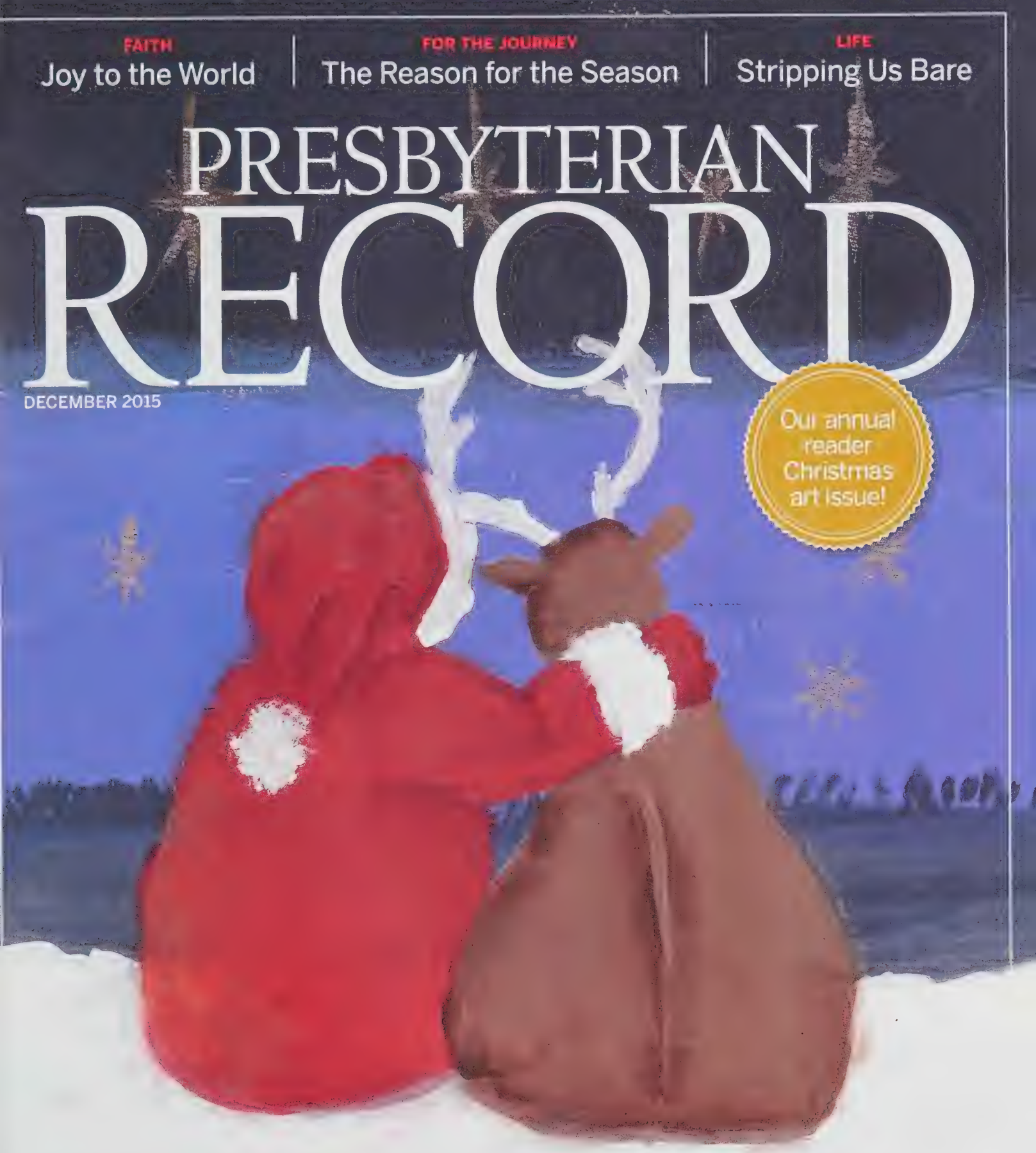

Escape from Pakistan

A story of faith, fear and flight to Canada.

PM40069388 RO9634

www.presbyterianrecord.ca

JUDY MALLORY, WARKWORTH, ONT.

Loving, gracious God,

We anticipate again the arrival of Christ in our lives.
We seek your hope, peace, love and joy in our world.
Our hearts break at the loss of innocent lives in senseless bombings.
We ache for refugees pouring through Europe, seeking safety for family.
We can feel overwhelmed by chaos and cruelty in this world.
In your incarnation you entered our human condition.
You know what it is to be a poor refugee.
Human cruelty tried to put you to death but your love could not be defeated.
Come again, Christ Jesus, and strengthen our resolve to share your love always.
Amen.

—A prayer by Rev. Karen Horst, Moderator of the 2015 General Assembly

PRESBYTERIAN
RECORD
DECEMBER 2015

34 COVER STORY

Escape from Pakistan

One family's story of faith and flight from persecution in Pakistan, through uncertainty in Sri Lanka, to a new home in Canada.

CHRISTMAS COVER ART CONTEST WINNER!
Hannah Watson, age 8, Warkworth, Ont.
(With a bit of help from Judy Mallory)

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FOR THE RECORD

Show Hospitality to Angels

Jesus' teaching is uncompromising: Do good.

By David Harris

"France will be unforgiving with the barbarians ..." So said French President François Hollande following the horrifying attacks in Paris in mid-November.

Yes, the attacks were murderous, heinous and vicious. Innocent people died. But "unforgiving?"

The word he used was *impitoyable*, which can mean ruthless, merciless, relentless, unmerciful, unfeeling, etc. Presumably it was meant to show the world that France remains strong. Or at least tc show French citizens that their president remains strong.

Many saw shades of former U.S. president George W. Bush in the aftermath of 9/11. Back then, the United States had an opportunity to react in a measured way—to reveal its self-proclaimed Christian character.

Sadly, it did no such thing. And where are we today after almost a decade and a half of fighting? In Paris. Mourning yet more innocent dead.

Looking at the whole arc of the holy writings from the Hebrew and Christian covenants, several particularly relevant themes emerge.

First, our faith is one that permeates all of life. As one biblical commentator put it: "To know God is to respond to him in faithful love and to have the whole of life determined by the understanding of oneself and one's

fellow men that becomes possible in this relation."

Secondly, among other things, scripture tells a story of the Hebrew people's deepening understanding of God. Unlike other ancient concepts of God, the God of Abraham is a God of restorative justice. Not that there aren't consequences for disobedience but, as epitomized by the prophet Hosea, God bends over backwards to restore broken relationships with people.

Thirdly, God calls us to protect all vulnerable people.

And then there's Christmas: the celebration of the all-powerful creator God setting aside divine power to become a vulnerable little baby—a baby whose short adult ministry was focused on preaching God's love, forgiveness and restoration.

God's love, as Jesus teaches, is uncompromising. "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ... Love your enemies, and do good ... for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful."

There are good arguments to be made from scripture in favour of pacifism; there are others that may be used to permit defending innocents against aggressors. What there is no case for is being unforgiving or unmerciful.

Yes, we should sympathize with France and all other peoples who are killed and terrorized in the world. But Christians can never countenance being unforgiving.

Whether to take up arms in the kind of situation we now face should never be an easy decision. It should keep us and our leaders up at night weighing what the best course is.

What should remain an easy decision is to continue to welcome all refugees, including Syrians displaced by the Daesh renegades. This Christmas, let's make sure there is room in our inns. "Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it." (Hebrews 13:2)

David Harris is the Record*'s publisher and editor.*

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Letters

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Finding a Balance

Back to Basics, September

I agree how important it is to balance alone time and community time. I find that alone time is (for me) necessary and precious. Just to find time in our busy lives to "Be still and know that I am God," is a way to stay focused and emotionally healthy. The importance of community is also very special. It can be uplifting to be part of a group of like-minded believers. Let's hope we can keep the balance as we continue the journey.

SHIRLEY HUCKINS, GODERICH, ONT.

Aging Painfully

The Long Goodbye, October

This piece by Andrew Faiz is excellent and I underscored and marked much of it. Since I am 92, I know of which I speak.

It's sadly true that some never get the chance to grow old while many are now hanging around too long. There are hard questions to be considered and I'm not sure there will be many answers.

A recent article stated that girls born this year could expect to live beyond 100 years. Whatever for? What does the length of time have anything to do with it?

When the body breaks down and the agony of age begins, what does it matter if the brain is still functioning? Isn't it a sad comment on our times that laws are brewing for assisted suicide which I'm sure will include many of the elderly.

Mr. Faiz's last sentence says it ›

all: "We need to be strong and courageous as we age slowly." And may I add, sometimes painfully?

GWYNETH WHILSMITH, KINGSTON, ONT.

We Should Listen to the Pope

It's been six months now since the Pope's encyclical *Laudato Si'* was released but I have yet to read any mention of it in the *Record* or heard a word from any pulpit. It carries an important message for us all, not just Roman Catholics. Congregations will happily sing *All Things Bright and Beautiful,* recite Psalm 24, or read the first lines of St. John's gospel, but evidence suggests concern for our God-given environment may be shallow and superficial; are we paying only lip-service?

Have any synods, congregations, sessions or outreach committees collectively studied the Pope's message looking for ways to apply it locally? Commentary in a recent technical periodical recommends "... that the Encyclical should be essential reading for all concerned with the environment [and] conservation ..." Doesn't that include all of us? How are we responding?

R.M. STRANG , WHITE ROCK, B.C.

Honouring a Servant of God

Re Prominent Presbyterian Evangelist Dies, November

May I congratulate the *Presbyterian Record*'s staff for accurately noting the passing of Rev. Dr. Larry Brice. Often in the life of the church there are those who do not receive the recognition within the church that they deserve. My friend Larry was one of those who quietly invested his life, his being, and his estate in promoting the Kingdom of God here on earth. I am certain Larry will find his place at his Lord's feet. But, back here, we too, have our tasks and responsibilities. Reachout Ministries must be wound up by Dec. 31, 2015 but our corporate responsibility is to remove any outstanding costs of Larry's ministry, which I fear will fall on Larry's estate and vicariously on his wife and their children. The new year will come and tax deductible receipts will go, and who cares? It would be my plea that we corporately and individually honour this faithful servant of God by eliminating any debit balance of Reachout Ministries.

ROBERT F. FLINDALL, PETERBOROUGH, ONT.

Thank You, Tony

Re The Beginning of Life, October

Hi Tony. I don't know you in person, yet I was in tears when I was reading your article. I am your daughter Debbie's work colleague. I cried because I fully understand now where Debbie's righteousness, elegance and gracefulness come from. You indeed have raised a very sweet, honest and nonjudgmental daughter. I cried because you indeed have set up a very positive model and attitude to all of us who have been facing setbacks daily. Thanks for all your positive energy and encouragement. You indeed have shed light and hope to me that where there is a will, there is a way.

All my sincere blessings to you and your family.

HYDI SHAM, ONLINE

Act, and Encourage Others to Follow

Re Vote With Vision, October

I was confused by Andrew Faiz's instruction to "not shove your faith into your politics," but to "let your faith instruct your vision for Canada." It almost seemed to me to be like the "we vote CBC" signs that sprung up prior to the election; that is, vote for anyone but the Conservatives. The election results seem to indicate a growing desire to have the government do for us what we should in fact be doing ourselves. The next article by Connie Wardle outlines many cries for the government to do more for the Syrian refugees. This is a cop-out. Demanding more from the government should not be the extent of our efforts. As Christians we need to share our resources and encourage others to follow our example. Going into debt as a country is not the example we should be setting. Our children and grandchildren may wish to support other initiatives.

BARRY BELLAMY, LAKEFIELD, ONT.

Justice Has Been Served

Re Residential Schools coverage, September

Two concerns bother me about the above issue:

1. Lack of viewpoint from teachers and staff of the schools
2. Monetary compensation for alleging abuse.

Considering the above, I do not feel justice has been effected, with all due respect to those honestly affected.

FAY STRANG, MARMORA, ONT.

Dear Fay,
This is not a new story. It has been told many, many times and in many different ways. The Record *published a remembrance from one of the teachers several years ago. Testimony has been delivered in public courts and at various Truth and Reconciliation events. The facts as we understand them are not for debate. They are facts. Horrible things were done by ordinary, church-sponsored people to little children. And that is why churches had to pay court-induced reparations to the victims under their care.*

Thank you for your letter. God bless.

AMY MACLACHLAN, MANAGING EDITOR

WILLIAM, AGE 10, ST. JAMES, FOREST, ONT.

All letters—taken from emails, by post, online comments and from the Presbyterian Record Community Facebook group—have been edited for space. There are many ways you can join the conversation, by pen or by keyboard. Share your voice.

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POP CHRISTIANITY

Be Joyful in Hope

Jesus is in you. By Andrew Faiz

Some quote Matthew 25:35-40 to prove we have a biblical responsibility to care for and shelter the "other," the "stranger." Some quote Matthew 25:35-40 to prove we have no obligation to the "outsider" because the passage refers to those inside the community of believers; in fact, we have no obligation outside the circle of believers.

Some quote Romans 1:26-27 to prove God condemns homosexuality. Some quote Romans 1:26-27 to argue the passage isn't so much against homosexuality, given awkward translations, but needs to be seen within the context of race and cultural tensions between the Hellenistic Jews and the Gentiles.

Some say the people claiming to be refugees are really migrants. Some say war caused the refugees, so the only lasting solution is to bring an end to that war. Some say Europe and North America can absorb all the refugees and should do so. Some say the problem belongs to wealthy Muslim nations to solve. Some say the world needs more aid support, either through faith-based, secular or government agencies. Some place the onus on the United Nations.

Some say the Alberta Tar Sands are an ecological blight and are ruining Canada's reputation around the world. Some say the Alberta Oil Sands have helped save Canada from economic ruin and will continue to do so.

'If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone'

Everybody claims his or her viewpoint is biblical, is true to the Great Commission and honest to his or her spirituality.

Some fear economic depressions. Some fear criminality. Some feel guilty about their own wealth and fortunes. Some focus on sin. Some focus on redemption. Everyone talks about grace. Everyone reads the Bible; everyone quotes it; which is not surprising given there are 31,102 verses to choose from.

Some are listening for grace. Some are listening for the Word. Some are grinding axes. Some are supercilious.

Everyone is evangelising in one way or another; everyone seems to believe others are not evangelising enough or not evangelising properly or not evangelising in the way or on the subject they would approve.

St. Paul said: "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

"Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

"Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."

Jesus said: "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

Merry Christmas.

Andrew Faiz is the Record's *senior editor.*

BULLETIN

Community and World News

CP IMAGES

IN THE NEWS

We Must 'Uphold Our Values'

Child of a Presbyterian manse, Jane Philpott is the first doctor to be Minister of Health. By Jonathan Scott

The 2012 Liberal Party of Canada biennial convention in Ottawa ended with a party in the old railway building across from the Chateau Laurier. A young MP was dancing nearby; his name was Justin Trudeau and he had a ridiculous goatee. It had been a good, transformative convention. There was a sense that despite being written off in the press, the party wasn't dead yet.

What stands out in my mind was the conversation I had with my friend, David. This was our first Liberal convention. I was there as a commentator with iPolitics.ca; he was there because his mother was considering standing for Parliament.

Fast forward to this November, on a Skype call I spoke with his mother, now the Hon. Dr. Jane Philpott MP, Canada's first medical doctor to serve as Minister of Health, and the recently elected Liberal Member of Parliament for Markham-Stouffville, in the GTA. ›

IN THE NEWS, continued

I wanted to talk with the new minister about three things: her upbringing as the daughter of a Presbyterian minister in small-town Ontario, her approach to politics and her task to help admit and resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees into Canada.

Philpott was born when her father was still at Knox College, Toronto—an experience I can relate to, as the son of a Presbyterian minister who himself grew up playing on the University of Toronto campus, and whose parents now live in the suburban riding next door to Philpott's.

Philpott grew up in Hespler, near Cambridge, Ont. Her father, Rev. Wallace Little, was the minister at St. Andrew's. Philpott is quick to praise her upbringing, and in true Presbyterian fashion notes, "traditions do have an impact," but more so, "as the daughter of a Presbyterian minister, it did have a huge impact on my life. The modeling I got from my parents, that they not only expressed the faith values but lived them out, shaped me ...

"The primary thing was to look out for others. I had received an incredible number of opportunities and that required I take on responsibility ... we are blessed to be a blessing."

This is the kind of honest moment Canadians say they want in politics, I suggest, but I wonder how Philpott, who like so many before her campaigned on doing politics differently, can put that promise into practice. "Well, I try to be an eternal optimist," she notes, before speaking about respect, and noting that she is not unique in her desire to do good through politics; other colleagues in all parties share the same goal.

During the campaign, she refused to refer to a "campaign war chest," thinking it glorified conflict. It was a small, semantic distinction, but one that somehow resonated, and was no doubt important to a former medical missionary to Africa. While there, she lost a young child to bacterial meningitis en route to hospital in Niger, a tragic, heart-wrenching situation she discussed with *The National Post*, saying, "We knew that when we went, we were prepared to put everything on the line for our work, as I try to do every day—to say, 'God, you gave me another day, let me use it for how you need me.'"

It's a tragic story, one that grounds the minister tasked with admitting 25,000 Syrian refugees to Canada.

I ask her how she reacts to the xenophobia towards refugees the West has seen since the terrorist attacks in Paris.

She starts with a play on the party line—"Our government was elected on a mandate to be compassionate"—before conceding, "I try not to be discouraged by the naysayers while listening to all voices, all Canadians ... I've been overwhelmed by Canadians' desire to help, who share our vision to help those in need." But then, she makes a clear pitch to our better angels: "We have to uphold our values, and use those values to serve; we have to be compassionate".

It's the third time she's used the word "compassion" in our seven-minute interview.

Jonathan Scott is a member of St. John's, Bradford. Follow him on Twitter: @J_Scott.

STUDY GUIDE ON SEXUALITY NOW AVAILABLE

At the end of October, the Presbyterian Church in Canada released a study guide on human sexuality entitled Body, Mind and Soul. It was created at the request of the General Assembly and was put together by Justice Ministries and the Committee on Church Doctrine.

The 119-page document includes both the main study guide, written by Rev. Dr. Emily Bisset, and additional resources to help church groups as they work their way through the different perspectives it presents.

The guide itself includes four main informational chapters ranging in length from three to 23 pages, and a chapter encouraging activities like listening and prayer circles. The longest chapters explore the main passages of scripture that are often turned to when discussions of sexual orientation arise, and theological views on matters like creation and sin that affect our understandings of gender, sexuality and identity. The other chapters provide a run-down of the current doctrine of the Presbyterian Church in Canada and some information about biological and psychological studies. All of the chapters are interspersed with discussion questions.

The guide also includes a pair of appendices with information about the official views of other denominations and a summary of statements approved by PCC General Assemblies.

General Assembly recommended that the various courts of the church share the results of their conversations with Justice Ministries and the church doctrine committee. Church groups are encouraged to provide feedback before Feb. 15, 2016. A survey is included with the guide and can also be downloaded on its own.

The entire guide is available as a free download at presbyterian.ca, and a print copy can be ordered for $10 from the Resource Centre at the denomination's national offices. *—CW*

WELCOME REFUGEES; REJECT THE VIOLENCE

In the wake of the deadly attacks in Paris and Beirut in November, the Canadian Council for Refugees issued a statement expressing outrage at the "mass murders" and dismay at "some public statements unfairly associating refugees with security risks."

"We hope that Canadians will remember that Syrian refugees are victims of this violence and will redouble their commitment to welcome them in Canada," said the non-profit coalition, which represents 171 member organizations including the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

The Nov. 17 statement noted that refugees are subjected to rigorous security checks by Canadian Border Services and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service—measures that do not apply to thousands of people who enter Canada each day for other reasons.

"It is unfair that refugees are singled out for suspicion. ... It appears that most of those committing the attacks in Paris were French or Belgian citizens: European citizens can easily enter Canada without any security screening," they noted.

"Syrian refugees have more to be fearful of than Canadians do. Opening our doors to refugees is one of the strongest ways possible to reject the violence and the incitement to hatred and division represented by the attacks."

You can find the full statement at ccrweb.ca. —*CW*

New Associate Secretary for Canadian Ministries

Jennifer de Combe is the new associate secretary of the Canadian Ministries department effective Dec. 7.

De Combe previously served as executive director of Tyndale St-Georges Community Centre, a joint Presbyterian-Anglican ministry in Montreal, and before that at Montreal City Mission, a United Church ministry.

"I've always been interested in social ministries and Christian education," she said. "I love participating in the whole life of the church. I love worship. I love social justice. I love fellowship."

She calls the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul in Montreal her church home.

"I hope to help churches be church in different ways," she said of her new job, noting that she has an interest in new models for congregations.

De Combe has a master's degree in sacred theology from McGill University and is a candidate for ministry. —*Connie Wardle*

Residential Schools Museum Opens in Winnipeg

On Nov. 3, the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation opened at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, housing the materials gathered by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission during its five-year mandate.

According to the university's website, the Centre will house "thousands of video- and audio-recorded statements from Survivors and others affected by the schools and their legacy; millions of archival documents and photographs from the Government of Canada and Canadian church entities; works of art, artefacts and other expressions of reconciliation presented at TRC events; and research collected and prepared by the Commission."

"Witnessing the opening of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation was both a sacred moment and an exciting event," said Rev. Stephen Kendall, the Presbyterian Church's principal clerk. "It was sacred and even sobering, knowing that it is the repository of such a painful, personal and significant part of our history. It was exciting because it is so beautifully constructed and cared for, led by indigenous people, and it will provide for generations to come, a place to learn and study the truth, and pursue meaningful reconciliation."

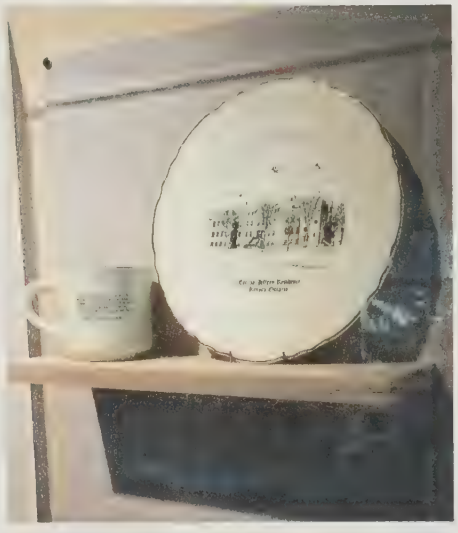

PHOTO BY STEPHEN KENDALL

Kendall has been involved in healing and reconciliation work since 1998, when the first claim relating to residential schools was filed against the PCC, through to the final TRC event held in Ottawa last June.

To learn more about the Centre, visit umanitoba.ca/nctr. —*AM*

IN THE NEWS

Very Adult Business

Justin Trudeau built his campaign on a passage from 1 Corinthians.

By Jonathan Scott

Almost three years ago when he launched his campaign for Liberal leader in Montréal, Justin Trudeau gave a speech that looking back still surprises me. He had longer hair then and a trendier suit. But he almost presciently choreographed this campaign, including the "just not ready" attack.

In fact, he basically embraced it.

Quoting St. Paul, he owned up to the challenge of proving his mettle and called on an entire generation to join him: "'When I was a child, I spoke as a child. But now that I am a man, I put away childish things.' It is time for us, for this generation of Canadians to put away childish things. More, it is time for all of us to come together and get down to the very serious, very adult business of building a better country for ourselves, for our fellow Canadians and for our children."

He went on to say, "this road will be one long, Canadian highway. We will have ups and downs. Breathtaking vistas and a few boring stretches. And with winter coming, icy patches." He would top the polls before plummeting to third, only to rebound, slowly but surely throughout this campaign, to take the lead at exactly the right time.

It's fascinating how clearly that speech set out Trudeau's plan. His whole philosophy—about middle class economics, First Nations rights, national unity, the hard work of politics—is there.

'It is time for all of us to come together and get down to the very serious, very adult business of building a better country for ourselves, for our fellow Canadians and for our children'

More still, it's fascinating how the speech was inspired by his Catholic upbringing and his McGill English Lit degree (and no doubt that of his chief advisor, Gerry Butts).

It's fascinating to realize they had a plan all along.

Trudeau opened that speech in Montréal with a quote from Goethe: "Make no small dreams, they have not the power to move the soul." He might also have quoted Goethe's epigram, "Against criticism a man can neither protest nor defend himself; he must act in spite of it, and then it will gradually yield to him," for that is exactly what Trudeau did during this campaign. And it worked.

Throughout his years as leader, Trudeau had to prove that he is up to the task. *National Post* columnist Michael den Tandt was the first to label this narrative frame as "the hero's journey," writing: "A young warrior appears, often of secretly noble parentage. He or she is called to adventure, initially refuses the call, but eventually yields to destiny, to take up the mantle and burdens of leadership."

Instead, Trudeau the Younger set his own path, embracing his own words at the eulogy of his father that "it's all up to us, all us, now," and echoing those words again in Montréal in 2013, saying, "It is time for all of us to come together and get down to the very serious, very adult business of building a better country for ourselves, for our fellow Canadians and for our children."

Jonathan Scott is a former Liberal speechwriter, communications consultant and a member of St John's, Bradford, Ont.

CP IMAGES

Faith.

Deepening your relationship with God

DEANA WEYMAN,
ST. ANDREW'S, KING CITY, ONT.

LEADERSHIFT

Joy to the World!

There is nothing more that needs to be said.

By Ross Lockhart

My wiper blades scraped against the icy windshield, sparkling with the reflection of inflatable reindeer dotting the front yards in our small northwestern Ontario town. The snow was falling gently in Dryden as I made my way down quiet streets to the local hospital. It was Christmas Eve. In just a few hours the church would be full of all ages, as children dressed in bathrobes and angel wings retold the familiar manger story. In the charged silence of that space, one voice, with trembling lips, would begin singing "Silent Night, Holy Night" while hundreds of faces, illuminated in the flicker of a candle's flame, waited to join in. ›

LEADERSHIFT, continued

It would be a particularly difficult Christmas in this remote northern city, in light of the devastating layoffs at the local pulp and paper mill. Unemployment coupled with ongoing economic uncertainty made it difficult for many to "Deck the halls with boughs of holly" even though "tis the season to be jolly" or to declare boldly, "It's the most wonderful time of year" telling everyone to "be of good cheer." Even Max the Moose, our town mascot, looked a little forlorn in the deep, dark cold of winter standing alone on Highway 17, his big eyes and silly antlers pleading for someone to stop and lend a hand. No, for many in this one-industry town, this Christmas would have a decidedly low-key feel. As I went about my preparations for the evening services, I had one more stop to make.

The parking lot at the hospital was almost empty by 5 p.m. on Christmas Eve. I stepped out of the car and crossed over icy ruts where cars were parked earlier, oil leaks mixing with fresh snow leaving dark smudges on Creation's canvas. Through the swirl of snowflakes, a pale blue "H" appeared in the distance and a red sign brighter than Rudolph's nose declaring "Emergency" stood just a few short steps away. The motorized doors opened with a swoosh as I strolled through the empty waiting room, pausing for my usual chat at the nurse's station while checking the roll of reluctant patients. A singing Santa was perched upon the countertop beside hand sanitizer, coffee cups and medical charts. The next hour was spent visiting room to room, passing out candy canes and making sure that those who could not be in church were comforted and remembered. Mindful of the time and needing to get back to open the church doors and crank up the heat, I paid one last visit to a quiet corner room where one of our longtime members was losing a battle with cancer.

'This will be my last Christmas,' she said with a hint of resignation. We sat in silence for a while. 'All those Christmases gone by are dear to me you know,' she said with determination. 'Tell me about them,' I replied

Several Christmas cards dotted the room and a small poinsettia plant was perched precariously on the windowsill. "Merry Christmas!" I said as I walked into the room and pulled up a chair at the bedside.

"So it is!" said the congregation member, a warm smile on her face. After a brief discussion regarding her latest medical tests she moved the conversation back to the holiday. "This will be my last Christmas," she said with a hint of resignation. We sat in silence for a while. "All those Christmases gone by are dear to me you know," she said with determination.

"Tell me about them," I replied.

For the next few minutes we traced her life history from early years through marriage and raising a family to widowhood and these final days. "Pastor." She paused as the wave of memory rolled over her. "This year I need Christmas more than ever... I need our hope in Jesus."

She shifted her weight uneasily in the rigid hospital bed and said, "Even like this I am still ready to celebrate Christmas, you know. I am sorry that I can't be in church tonight. I'm going to miss the carols especially."

"Which carol is your favourite?" I asked as the setting sun moved behind the horizon through the frosted hospital window. "Joy to the World!" she replied eagerly. And then in a move I did not expect she asked, "Would you sing it for me?" My first thought was that I was glad it was a private room!

"Sure," I replied, stalling in an attempt to remember all the verses. Clearing my throat I began the familiar words: "Joy to the world! The Lord is come! Let earth receive her King. Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room, and heav'n and nature sing..."

By the time I reached, "He rules the world with truth and grace" both of us were singing in hushed voices and tears were welling up in her eyes. There was nothing more that we needed to say. I placed a candy cane on her side table, kissed her on the forehead and walked out of the room. Even now, years later, I can still remember the sound of my feet moving from the squeaking polish of the hospital floor to the crunch of snow on sidewalk outside, the howling winter wind swirling all around and almost whispering, as if in prayer, "The wonders of His love, the wonders of His love..."

Rev. Dr. Ross Lockhart is associate professor at St. Andrew's Hall, Vancouver, and director of the Centre for Missional Leadership. This is his last article in a year-long column.

PAUL WANNAMAKER, ST. MATTHEW'S, INGLESIDE, ONT.

PROGRESSIVE LECTIONARY

Road-Building God

In Advent we're called to join in building a way of peace.

By Laurence DeWolfe

Second Sunday in Advent
December 6
Luke 1:68-79 / Luke 3:1-6

Our gospel today begins, "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea..." It goes on to mention three pocket puppet princes, and two high priests who served consecutively but are always recalled as if joined at the hip. On Christmas Eve we'll turn back the clock as Luke tells us of another emperor, another governor, and an imperial decree. In both stories Luke also gives us a map, like Google Maps inset on a webpage. We know where John the Baptist preached. We know the road Joseph and Mary had to take.

This is Luke's way of telling his first audience that the events behind his stories really, really happened. More than that, today Luke tells us God's plan for the redemption of the world unfolded in time, in a place, for a purpose, in the face of imperial powers dressed in the trappings of divinity. The advent of the Messiah meant far more than the spiritual renewal of the world. John announced, and Jesus incarnated God's decisive intervention in the world against the powers of the world.

According to Luke, John took his script from a worthy source. Isaiah's words referred literally to the roads the exiled Israelites had been pressed into building in service of Babylon's emperor and Babylon's gods. With prophetic imagination, Isaiah looked forward to a day when another Emperor would set the exiles free. God would build a highway so God's people could go home on ›

PROGRESSIVE LECTIONARY, continued

a wide and level road. What did John look forward to?

Luke tells us in his stories of Jesus and of the apostles' acts of faith and daring, that all unfolded within the Roman Empire, but beyond imperial control. The empire built roads that tied lands and peoples together, under close watch and control. Imperial gods weren't paraded on those roads, but imperial governors bearing the Emperor's divine seal of approval were. Commoners could watch those parades, but the roads weren't for their use.

John stayed clear of those roads. He walked rocky paths. He tramped through brush. He called people to come with him, to leave the symbols and products of imperial oppression behind. John announced that God the road-builder was already at work. People who responded to John's prophetic voice put their feet firmly on the ground and followed God's way. The people of Palestine lived as exiles in their own land. God's anointed would end their oppression. This is what John's father, Zechariah, sang about. It's our psalm for today. Jesus' mother sang about it too. It's our psalm for Advent 4.

Zechariah prophesied that John would prepare the people for the advent of the One who would guide them "into the way of peace." God's shalom. So much more than the enforced absence of conflict of the infamous Pax Romana. A pathway not of this world, but that can be followed in this world. Made possible not by Caesar, but by the Dayspring Messiah.

Don't push the names and place names aside as you rush to a personal, spiritual Christmassy message. Every name represents someone whose authority John and Jesus challenged. John announced, and Jesus incarnated, a reversal of the order those named men stood for. Every place named was a location for the road-building of God's new work. John calls us today to look and see where God is already at work in our wilderness. John calls us to get to work, digging, scraping, levelling the way of peace.

Rev. Dr. Laurence DeWolfe is minister at Glenview, Toronto.

KELSIE MACINTYRE, AGE 21, BROOKFIELD, PEI.

RENEWAL

The Fullness of Time

We don't want to miss him. By Fred Stewart

"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children."
—Galatians 4:4-5

We don't want to miss him.

Advent should be like a funnel that focuses us in on the most important part of Christmas; renewing our relationship with our Lord and Saviour.

However, Advent competes with so much that demands our attention. There is tremendous busyness and stress. We spend record amounts of money. We attempt to host and attend so many things. The church can be the centre of this activity with extra practices and set-ups and additional services and programs. The scheduling of special times with family, friends and co-workers adds to the monstrous expectations all designed to be experienced in a few weeks of December.

It takes much care not to miss him.

We don't want to miss him. Oh, we will have some special moments. A child's delight, ›

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RENEWAL, continued

a heart-pulling special on TV, a special warmth from familiar music and perhaps even a delightful amount of snowfall at just the right time. But often it all passes too quickly as we barely survive all the demands of the season and it is possible to absolutely miss him.

In an unlikely way and in an unlikely place, our God stepped into His creation and became one with His creatures. The God-Man was born. The timing was all His. The plan was His. The knowledge of God progressively revealed to His people suddenly became fully visible and knowable to all humankind. The future of God's people was revealed as our adoption as sons and daughters of the High God was made possible.

We don't want to miss him. It will take a plan. It will take intentionality. It will take concentrated effort. But it will be worth it. Let's start with the beginning of Advent. A good question we might ask ourselves during some time of reflection (which we set aside and protect religiously each day) might be this: "What difference did it make to the world that Jesus was born on earth 2,000 years ago?" This question can be made more personal when asked this way: "What difference does it make to me that God became human in Jesus?"

The faith and the faithful will be renewed if we make sure we don't miss him this Christmas season.

Rev. Fred Stewart is executive director of the Renewal Fellowship and minister at St. Andrew's, Bolsover, and Woodville Community churches.

AL SCHUT, COMOX VALLEY, COMOX, BC.

ORDINARY RADICAL

Encouraged by Others

Discovering the burden of love. By Amy MacLachlan

So this is it. The final installment of my year-long look at becoming an ordinary radical. It's fitting then that while you read this, I'll be at a conference in New Orleans, listening to Shane Claiborne talk about wealth and stewardship. A perfect end to a year that focused on Claiborne's teachings and his call to be a better Christian.

Am I a better Christian? I don't know. Perhaps I'm more aware of what that means, or at least of what that means to me. And from what I can tell, part of what it means is trying. Trying and failing, trying and succeeding, wanting to try but not quite getting there, then trying, trying, trying again. And through it all—and I think herein lies the secret—there are other Christians to encourage, bolster, and yes, even chastise, your efforts (or lack thereof).

I was told several times through the ›

ORDINARY RADICAL, continued

year that people were enjoying my column; that it meant something or spoke to them in some way. Those are nice words to hear—especially for us writers who love to be told that what we've produced is actually being read. But what was even nicer to hear was the empathy expressed; when I wrote something of my struggles, my discouragement, my frustrations, people told me to keep on keeping on. To not feel badly. To try again.

Isn't that what we all want? Just as a child tries to master a task but once again falls short, she looks to a loving parent to console and uplift; so too I need the support of others around me.

I think that's called community.

What does Oprah call that again? Ah yes, an 'aha moment.'

For the last year, I've been part of a Micah group—an initiative of Fuller Seminary in California that brings (mostly) preachers and pastors together to study, learn, support and encourage. We met again in early November, where the topic we considered was, "Burden." (And before I say anything else, I implore you to watch a TED Talk by Father Gregory Boyle, which you can find on YouTube. It's 20 minutes of pure awesomeness; a story of compassion and kinship, and the burden Boyle carries to serve and rehabilitate gang members in Los Angeles.)

Burden. It's a word I've never really given much thought to in the past. Burden means "to carry with difficulty." But Jesus told us to cast aside our burdens; to come to him and he will hand us a yoke that is light.

"God specially attends to how we love God and love our neighbour," states some of the reading material given to us for the Micah course. "This is the burden that is squarely and clearly given to us to carry. Our primary daily vocation is to demonstrate that we are doing these two things and doing so in power and love of The Good Neighbour."

It goes on to say: "The vocation of the Church is to be free of the yoke we cannot bear in order to carry the yoke we are intended to bear. In this we become expressions of God's righteousness and love. We are to carry what God's love gives us to carry. By grace we are freed from the weight of sin and guilt and are made free for the weight of love God wants us to carry."

I have often felt burdened by this column and the goal it set out to achieve. But when I think back, the burden became most heavy (refer to my June entry where I said exactly that) when I was trying to do things on my own; when I relied on myself instead of on friends and family, or on God.

A couple of months ago, I mentioned a reader who wrote me a letter, frankly telling me that my efforts will ultimately be in vain (and unsustainable) if I do not act in community.

And he was right.

I even noticed this while organizing (for the first time) the women's breakfast at my church. I thought, "How hard can it be?" Well, it's not hard, but there sure are a zillion things you have to attend to! Managing the entire thing on my own would have been sheer folly. Thankfully, many, many people volunteered their time and talents to help make the event a success. My burden became much lighter thanks to them. Without community, the burden is heavy. Difficult. Unsustainable.

And what of the burden God has given me? The burden that "God's love gives us to carry?" I felt led to start this column in an effort to figure out what that burden was. I can sense that I do indeed have a burden for others; to serve in some way. I had hoped that through writing, the answer would magically come to me. I was wrong. I'm still searching. And that's not a bad thing.

When my youngest daughter was baptized, my husband and I chose these words for the event:

"How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action." (1 John 3: 17-18)

This is our burden. May we always be willing to carry it.

Ongoing Challenge

I have a few special things coming up in the next couple of months that will continue to aid me in this walk. Do check my blog to hear about them, and leave me your comments. (My efforts to update the blog in the last six months or so have been abysmal, I know, but I will try harder now that I won't have a regular spot in the magazine to share my experiences.)

While the column is drawing to a close, there is still much that can be done. Over 11 entries, we've looked at our connection to "stuff" and tried purging and donating our things; at justice issues; on focusing on small acts done with great love; community-building; hospitality; and reflection, prayer and listening to God. I do hope you'll continue to think about these things, and to put them into practice, and I will do the same. Thank you for reading!

Amy MacLachlan is the Record's *managing editor. This is the last in a year-long column. You can follow her Ordinary Radical blog on our website.*

Life

Thoughts and inspiration for your daily life

WENDY FROATS, ST. MATTHEW'S, INGLESIDE, ONT.

FAMILY

Stripping Us Bare

Being open and vulnerable leads to support and help.

By Kelly Scott

We arrived on time for our meeting.

Dressed in "casual Friday" attire, we each wore the appropriate professional veneer. We exchanged the normal greetings of "Hello" and "How are you?"

Each of us said that we were fine and feeling well.

Some of us were not being transparent.

We hadn't known how to get out of bed that morning. We didn't want to face our peers and let them see our tear-stained faces but it was neither the time nor the place to let our feelings show.

Somewhere between the first and second course, one of the group asked, "Are your children home from university yet?"

Each of us smiled as we told what our children were doing. Between us, we had five children of university age.

Then I said, (I'm sure it was me, and not my husband), "We can hardly wait for our older two to arrive home ›

FAMILY, continued

for the holidays, but it seems that as soon as they arrive, the stress begins and we start counting down the days till they leave!"

Everyone laughed politely.

My husband and I shared that when our older two come home, they begin to assert their new-found independence in the form of breaking long-held house rules—food eaten in their bedrooms, curfews not honoured, dishes left on the coffee table instead of placed in the dishwasher.

Apparently growing up means you don't have to follow rules, especially your parents' rules.

We've even bumped into parents we haven't seen since long-ago hockey and figure skating days and they echo our words. We are thinking of starting a support group for all our friends who feel this way!

"We still love our children, but..." and I left the sentence unfinished.

And that's all it took for the barrier of politeness to break.

The other dad at the table laughed amiably. He said that his family got along well because they were a blended family and had worked at keeping their relationships.

The other woman at the table didn't laugh so easily. I've been there so I knew exactly what she would say next.

Her eyes welled up and she began to shake as she tried valiantly to suppress her tears. She lost the battle.

Sometimes being honest has this effect.

She went on to share the crisis currently taking place in her home—of a strain between parents and a child who is living contrary to how she was raised.

Why do we tell each other intimate details of our birthing experience, of breast-feeding and potty training but when our children reach adolescence, we clam up?

That day our professional meeting took on another agenda.

Living in relationship with Jesus has this effect!

Suddenly our conversation turned intimate as we spoke of rules and consequences and the comfort and hope we have as adult children of the Most High.

We shared how my husband has taken to praying for our older children in the form of Canada's national anthem. In the anthem, we sing "God keep our land..." Dan now sings/prays, "God keep our children" and he really means they are Yours, God, not ours!

"For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me the petition that I made to Him. Therefore I have lent him to the Lord. As long as he lives, he is given to the Lord." (1 Samuel 1:27-28)

They were never ours, were they? Whether at infant baptism or dedication, those little ones were given to our God. They are His to keep, His to lead and guide and ultimately, His to discipline.

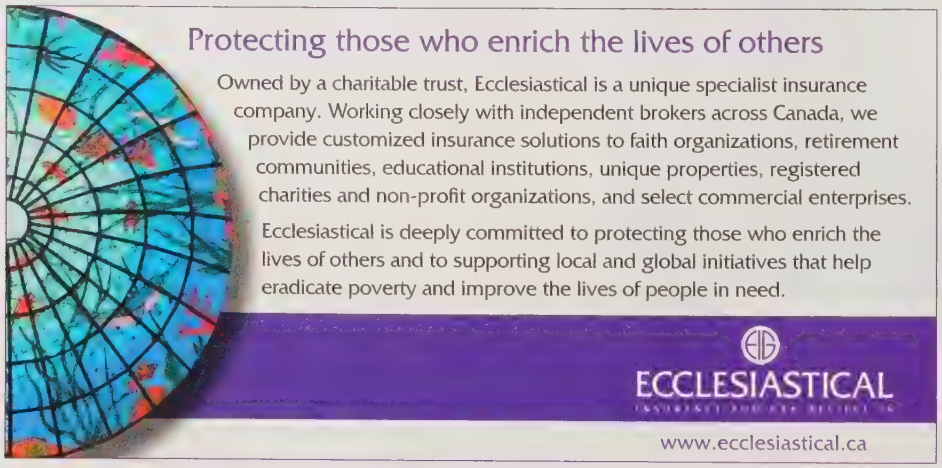
Sometimes we need to be transparent with one another in order to help each other. Sometimes, we need to be stripped bare like Jesus in order to comfort.

"If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ... Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus ..." (Philippians 2: 1-2, 4-5)

The God of the universe laid it all aside to come to us in human flesh, Emmanuel, in order that we might be comforted by His presence, His example and His intercession.

How I long to follow His example!

Kelly Scott writes and cooks in Bradford, Ont. She blogs at cookinguptroublewithkelly.com, and on the Record's *website.*



ALICE CARTER, AGE 7, KNOX, WATERLOO, ONT.

MEDITATION

A Blessing a Day

From an ancient book to an e-book. By Gwyneth Whilsmith

My sister had an ancient book of graces and although the language was archaic, children, mine included, vied for the honour of reading the grace for that day. She and I often talked about translating the words, making them more understandable, but it took years for me to get around to it, only to discover the prayers began to repeat themselves (which we had never noticed before) so, I only had enough for about one third of a book.

I sent out a call to my friends. Did they have a favourite grace, maybe one their parents said? And yes, many of them did, but still not enough to fill a book for 365 days of the year. So, there was nothing to do but sit down and write them myself.

Each prayer is only four to six lines, but it still took a lot of thought. A photo taken by my son-in-law, Stuart of my husband and two grandkids down on the beach would be the cover photo since all three were indeed blessings. A friend, Bob, in the printing business came on board to help.

And so, a small book of daily graces before meals called *Blessings* came into being. It sold very well. Then sadly, Bob died suddenly, and the book did too when I ran out of copies a few years later. Still I ›

MEDITATION, continued

KWABENA, AGE 9, DIXIE, MISSISSAUGA, ONT.

kept getting orders. About a year ago, Judy, the daughter of a friend informed me she knew a family who still used the book of graces every day and she was calling to ask if she could buy a copy? No, afraid not.

Then, grandson Duncan offered to put it on the Internet. So, now, miracle of miracles, *Blessings* is a Kindle book on Amazon, available to any and all. So, yes, blessings still abound.

December 6

Dear God, in this Advent season
When we prepare for Christmas,
Help us to never forget Your great love
That sent Jesus, Your son, as our Saviour.
Accept our humble thanks and bless us
As we eat the food which You have provided.
Amen.

December 19

O God, you are the God of peace,
Help us to find peace in our homes,
At work, within the Church.
Help us to find peace between the races,
And the nations of the world.
Help us to see every person as a brother or sister for whom
Christ died, and make us grateful for your love.
Amen.

December 25

Lord Jesus, you were born in a lowly manger,
Keep us from coveting wealth and luxury.
There was no room in the inn,
Keep our lives uncrowded so that
There is always room for you.
You lived among common things,
Keep us from thinking any task too common for us.
We thank you for the blessings of this day.
Amen.

December 27

Dear God, thank you for our friends and family
Who are so dear to us.
Wherever they are we ask You to bless
Them and keep them safe.
Thank you for the food you provide.
Amen.

December 31

Eternal God, as the old year departs,
Rid us of old habits that have hindered
Our being at peace with ourselves and others.
Thank you for all Your blessings of the
Past year, and help us to remember the needs
Of others in the coming year.
Amen.

Longtime contributor Gwyneth Whilsmith's last article for the Record *was "Prayer of a 90-Year-Old." You can find her book of blessings, and her new book* I Know God's in Here Somewhere, *at amazon.com/author/gwynethwhilsmith.*

JULIA, AGE 7, ST. JAMES, FOREST, ONT.

REFLECTION

Growing Stronger

Sharing my faith story. By Rob Donovan

I grew up in Thunder Bay, Ont., surrounded by Christian values on both sides of the family and attending a large Presbyterian church in Fort William. My grandfather was an active session member. Both my grandmothers were strong in their faith. My parents struggled most weeks getting us dressed and into the car for that long 15-minute drive downtown. I knew that we were Presbyterian Christians and Sunday attendance was what we did. I was in the junior choir, was confirmed at 14 with many other kids, and knew and understood the Christian story well. Saying a prayer when times were tough was something I did regularly. We said blessings at the dinner table and at bedtime—a fairly automatic part of our daily routine.

But Christianity was never something anyone talked about outside of the family. Many of my friends went to one church or another but it wasn't cool and certainly wasn't something kids would ever talk about, except for the Catholic kids who could go skiing on Sunday morning because their families were lucky enough to go to church on Saturday.

As I went through university, personal prayer remained a part of me, but I had little exposure to other practicing Christians. My friends were all from Christian backgrounds but they never went to church. For me, a shy kid, going to church alone was a terrifying thought. ›

REFLECTION, continued

In 1999, married, and after building a house in Pefferlaw and moving to Georgina, my mom mentioned this little church of 20 people she had attended a few times in the Ice Palace. I thought she was absolutely crazy! Church in a hockey arena? Not my way of thinking about a church. But I went because she asked me and I guess I've been there ever since.

Why then, given my background, do I find faith so hard? Those who know me can attest that I've always been a thinker and by extension a worrier. I struggle when I don't understand something. The lyrics of one of my favourite U2 songs (from back in my university days) still resonates. It says:

"I believe in the Kingdom Come / When all the colours will bleed into one / Bleed into one. / But yes, I'm still running. / You broke the bonds / And you loosed the chains / Carried the cross of all my shame / Of all my shame, you know I believe it."

I know what Bono means. Faith is hard for me because I don't have all the answers I seek. It ebbs and flows. Sometimes I'm solid as a rock, other times, well maybe not so much. While prayer is part of my life, sometimes it only goes like this: "God, be with me. I know I said this yesterday but please help me get through this day today." But as I tell my kids, you won't find what you are looking for unless you actually go searching for it.

So I search and think and read and look for answers. It's tough to be a Christian in an increasingly secular world. Like any parent with teenagers who would rather stay in bed on a Sunday morning like their friends, or say, "Why can't we be like normal kids and have an easy Sunday?" I pray for the strength and wisdom to guide us all to church yet again. In truth, coming to church not only connects me to God, but also reminds me of the journey towards that strong faith I so desire. You know, that all-knowing feeling that Jesus is right beside me, always.

But as I ponder how to tell my faith story, it dawns on me that maybe I need to remind myself of the times in my life that I couldn't easily explain the outcome other than, maybe God's been there all along. So I remembered ...

That I was once a terrified 14-year-old praying for help on a spring day in 1985 as I lay in a bed staring out a window at a tree. And I remembered the comfort I felt and the fear that subsided when that small bird appeared to be watching me from that tree while the surgeons at Sick Kids prepped me for open-heart surgery.

That I've sensed a presence and help getting through uncertain times like that winter day in 1993, when the sun warmed my face and eased my nervousness as I sat in the doctor's office, waiting to hear if those transfusions during heart surgery had given me that strange new virus called HIV. (They did not.)

That I was once a young father, with a wife and two babies at home in Pefferlaw, praying in desperation from a GO Bus on the 400, that somehow, someway, I could be relieved of the punishing commute that had lengthened from one hour to two-and-a-half hours and was pushing me to exhaustion. And that unexpected job offer that came a few months later out of nowhere.

That I felt like a nervous little kid when I joined that small group in the church in 2007. That experience would eventually give me the courage to say grace at dinner when non-Christian friends and family would visit our home.

And finally, that unexpected call just a few days before Christmas 2009, that would relieve Melinda and me from the torture of a bad business venture that had pushed us both to the point of mental and financial collapse.

So as I continue to learn and grow, maybe I need to remember a bit more. Please keep helping me. Maybe the faith I seek is closer than I think.

Rob Donovan is a member at Keswick, Ont., where he first gave this testimony as part of an ongoing series called My Faith Story. More of these stories will be printed here over the next year. You can add yours online.

The Church of St Andrew and St Paul *is seeking a lead minister*

We are a vibrant congregation with members from a range of backgrounds and cultural communities located in the dynamic downtown of Montreal. We emphasize Biblical preaching which relates the gospel of Christ to contemporary life. Our service is traditional and is supported by a ministry of music which is known throughout the city for the excellence of the choir and organ performance.

We have a Christian Education specialist and a full program of activities, both within the congregation and in outreach. We are well-served by a capable and dedicated lay leadership. As a large, downtown congregation we are seeking a minister gifted in the areas of leading worship, preaching and teaching, with strong pastoral and relational skills. More information about our congregation and a copy of our profile can be found at www.standrewstpaul.com. Candidates must be, or be eligible to become, ministers within the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Interim Moderator: The Rev. Dr. Dale Woods, 3495 University St., Montreal, QC H3A 2A8
Tel. 514-288-5256 ext 201. Email: dwoods@presbyteriancollege.ca

PWS&D IS THE DEVELOPMENT AND RELIEF AGENCY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA

ABRIDGED VERSION

PWSDevelopments

The quarterly newsletter for Presbyterian World Service & Development • 2015 Edition, Issue 4

THE POWER OF EDUCATION

Opening Classroom Doors to Create Brighter Futures

NO MATTER WHERE THEY LIVE in the world, children have big dreams. They dream about the jobs they will have when they grow up and the difference they will make in their communities and in the world.

Saima is one such child.

For a time, the ten-year-old worked alongside her father Sayed at a brick factory in Afghanistan. Saima was happy that she could help support her family, but her own dreams for the future were quickly lost amid the factory's dust and grime.

It is the same for many families in Afghanistan. In order to earn enough money to meet their basic needs, parents often require help from every member of the family, even young children. This means that many children like Saima are unable to attend school.

A Child's Right to Education

PWS&D is working with partners in Guatemala, Afghanistan and Malawi to help vulnerable girls and boys get the education they need to access new opportunities for brighter futures.

Depending on the needs of the specific community, PWS&D's education programs provide children with classroom facilities, tutoring, textbooks, supplies, uniforms and scholarships to attend school. Teachers also receive training in new and innovative ways ▶

More and more, there is a greater awareness that attending school is a basic human right for girls and boys, and one of the most powerful tools for eliminating poverty.

to share knowledge with their students, leading to a much better education.

In some communities, there is a need to generate greater awareness about a child's right to education. In Saima's village in Afghanistan, PWS&D's local partners conducted meetings with community leaders and parents to share how a quality education can help children overcome challenging circumstances and contribute to the sustainable development of their communities.

At one meeting, Sayed listened to these words, feeling inspired and encouraged. He realized Saima should not be making bricks but engaging her curiosity and exploring her passions in school.

After the meeting, he promised to enrol Saima in school.

Not only did Sayed uphold his promise, he is now working hard to raise this issue with others in his community. "I am proud to send my daughter to school," he shares. Sayed is trying to convince other parents to send their children, especially their daughters, to school as well.

Since PWS&D started supporting the girls' education project in Afghanistan, over 4,000 girls have been enrolled in school.

An Enduring Gift

Investing in quality education in countries like Malawi and Afghanistan means more people have the opportunity to be trained in medicine, agriculture, auto-mechanics or small-business development—enabling more individuals to rise above poverty and contribute to their society's growth and development.

It also means that children learn the important life skills they need to become leaders and contribute to the peaceful development of their country.

For a child, education is an enduring gift. PWS&D works in partnership with parents and community leaders to help them understand the long-term impacts of education that may not be so visible on the surface. More and more, there is a greater awareness that attending school is a basic human right for girls and boys, and one of the most powerful tools for eliminating poverty. Together, we are helping children like Saima achieve their full potential, realize their big dreams and begin to create a more just world. ■

RESPOND WITH US TO THE SYRIA CRISIS

DONATIONS MATCHED UNTIL DECEMBER 31, 2015

Donations made towards relief for Syrian refugees will now go even further.

For all eligible donations made until December 31, the Government of Canada will contribute a matching amount towards Canada's "Syria Emergency Relief Fund." You can make a donation to PWS&D through your church, by mailing a cheque to the office, donating online or calling **1-800-619-7301 x291**. Please mark all donations as "Syria Relief." Please give today.

Focus

Stories of mission, ministry and community

RAYNA, AGE 10, ST. JAMES, FOREST, ONT.

MISSION

Rebuilding a Christian Presence

Touring Hungary, Ukraine and Romania.

By Glynis Williams

Hungary, Ukraine and Romania are each unique in their history and their languages; they are also united by a common Hungarian identity and a history that has played havoc with their borders. The Presbyterian Church in Canada has several missions there under the care of Anna and David Pandy-Szekeres and Brian Johnston. In this part of the world, historic events remain vivid and define the people, shaping the work of their churches. I travelled there in September along with Rev. Karen Horst, moderator of the 2015 General Assembly.

It has been less than 25 years since the collapse of communism in the region, and the history of subjugation and fear is still alive in older generations. Conversations with those in their mid-20s are different, with an optimism not indulged in ›

MISSION, continued

by their parents.

The Hungarian government has been active over the past two decades in reclaiming and restoring churches and schools in Hungary, Ukraine and Romania, which had been repurposed, or simply closed, by the Soviets for half a century. People seemed surprised when we asked if the government's significant investment in these areas was based on the hope of regaining lost territory. Apparently that is not the motive. It was one more indication of how strong is the bond of language and Christian faith. It may also explain the worry about losing Hungary's Christian identity, which the Prime Minister raised during the current refugee crisis.

While most Canadians view Ukraine as a country at war, with Russia occupying Crimea and an economy in ruins, what we witnessed was the Reformed Church's emphasis on schools.

In sub-Carpathian Ukraine, most teachers are members of the Reformed Church and daily devotions are routine. In secondary schools, most students are residential, returning home on weekends. Schools are modest but well maintained, and boast new equipment. The teachers are proud of the quality of their church schools, which rank high in national statistics. The Reformed Church secondary school of Nagybereg was the first school opened in 1993 after the collapse of the Soviet system. Anna Pandy-Szekeres was its first principal.

The Hungarian government not only provides most of the funds for building restoration but also pays the primary and secondary school teachers' salaries, minimal as they are.

Work among the Roma communities primarily focuses on nurturing and equipping children to succeed in school and to open doors for them as adults. Kindergartens and help-schools provide food, encouragement, and a learning environment that prepares these youngsters to enter the state schools where classrooms are large and individual attention is limited. We witnessed a silent, staring boy who would not sing nor join in the activity, but snuggled close to the pastor who arrived to greet us. The power of an individual to transform another's life was undeniable.

The Reformed Church of Romania is divided into two districts, each led by a bishop. Our first destination was Samuel House in the Kiralyhagomellek District. As darkness descended, we drove deep into the countryside to find 34 children under their care. Samuel House provides underprivileged parents with institutional help to raise their children in the Christian-Reformed spirit. Poverty is pervasive in Romania, and it is a huge challenge for many families to provide their children with the basic needs to develop their full potential.

A full-time after-school teacher assists the older children with homework. The director's husband runs a farm which provides 50 per cent of the food, and is a wonderful opportunity for the kids to connect with the land and learn new skills. It is easy to be sentimental about children, but the innovative vision of this project was a beacon of hope in a region still emerging from a difficult past.

Brian Johnston, PCC mission staff, has been working as an English and music teacher at the United Protestant Seminary, in the Transylvania district of the Reformed Church of Romania. Based in Cluj for over 20 years, Johnston introduced us to the importance of music in church life. A special concert was arranged for the Moderator, preceded by a conversation with current and former seminary students. In spite of rigorous studies (compulsory Latin, Hebrew and Greek!), they sing and make music, expressing enthusiasm about their dreams for the future.

Romania's ghosts can be seen on street signs, such as: 18 December 1989. This date marks the fall of dictator Nicolae Ceaușsscu after 22 years of a brutal regime. Some confiscated church buildings and schools have been returned by the Romanian government, but Bishop Béla Kató explained that there are worrying threats to the process of restitution. He asked for our prayers and support.

We visited with local pastors, worshipping in their churches and sharing delicious food in their homes. Rev. Tibor Nagy is full of energy, new ideas, and was eager to show the historical museum they have started and their new community space. Rev. Arpad Tordai lives in the village of Aponagyfalu and has dreams of restoring their 400-year-old small church. Both studied at the seminary in Cluj, and have spent time in the U.S. In spite of other opportunities, Tibor and Arpad have chosen to work in small villages of a few hundred people. Their sense of call to these challenging situations was inspiring. They are eager for more contact with Canadian congregations for prayer and learning.

Eastern Europe struggles with its history of oppression, war and economic challenges, coupled with the recent tumultuous events. But it was obvious that many in the churches are heeding Jesus' call to care for one another and welcome the stranger.

Rev. Glynis Williams is the associate secretary of International Ministeries. In 2007 she worked as a resettlement officer with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Syria.

"Lego Tree and Santa" by Alex Glogoviecki, age 7, Toronto, Ont.

Maya MacLachlan, age 7, Knox, Oakville, Ont.

Demi Papadakis, age 6, St. Matthew's, Ingleside, Ont.

Our Annual Christmas Art Contest

A huge congratulations to our cover art winner, Hannah Watson of Warkworth, Ont.! If you can believe it, she's only eight years old. She did get some technical help and advice from Judy Mallory, but Hannah did all the painting.

What I love most about this painting of Santa with his arm wrapped around one of his reindeer is how peaceful they seem together— she's illustrated a magical moment between them, and that's one thing I love about Christmas—spending precious moments with those you love.

We know our readers love our annual art issue, and so I try to squeeze as many pieces in as possible, from our more amateur artists to our very accomplished artists (a special shout-out goes to Deana Weyman from St. Andrew's, King City, for sending us incredible artwork year after year!).

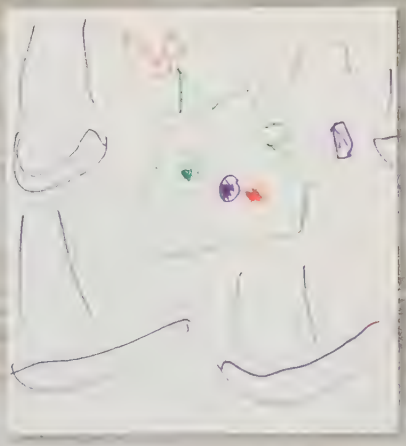
We've also had some especially unique contributions this time, including a carved nativity set by Al Schut of Comox Valley, B.C., and a Lego creation from my own little guy, Alex.

I want to thank each and every artist, young and old, who sent in your artwork—you continue to impress me. Thank you, and Merry Christmas!

Caroline

Caroline Bishop is the Record's *art director.*

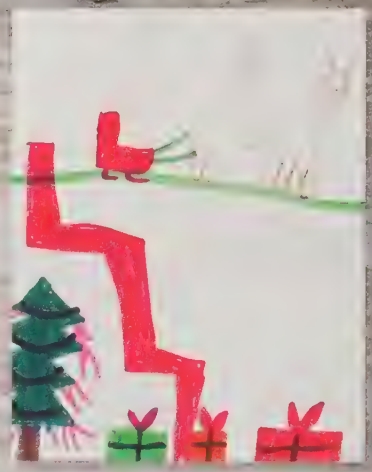
Brayden, age 7, St. James, Forest, Ont.



Kwadwo, age 5, Dixie, Mississauga, Ont.

Afua, age 11, Dixie, Mississauga, Ont.

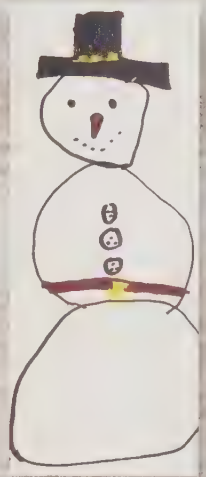
Aiden Pedersen, Grade 7, Knox, Waterloo, Ont.



Capi McLean, age 6, Knox, Waterloo, Ont.

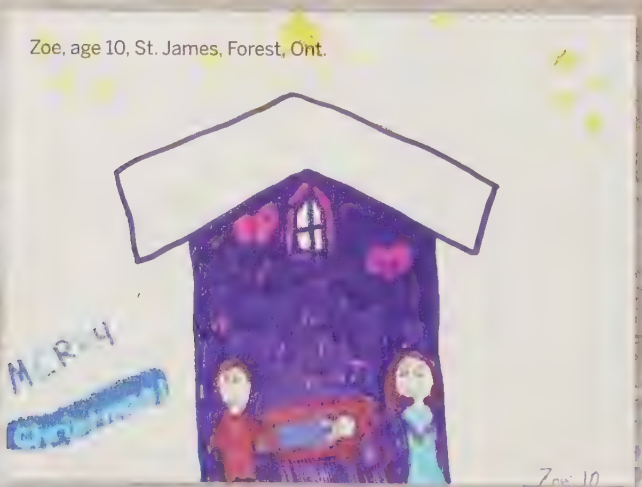
Taylar Armstrong, age 8, St. Matthew's, Ingleside, Ont.

William, age 10, St. James, Forest, Ont.



Zavior, age 9, St. James, Forest, Ont.

Zoe, age 10, St. James, Forest, Ont.



Duop, age 11, Dixie, Mississauga, Ont.

COUNTING CONTRADICTIONS

Watching miracles unfold in Hungary and Ukraine.

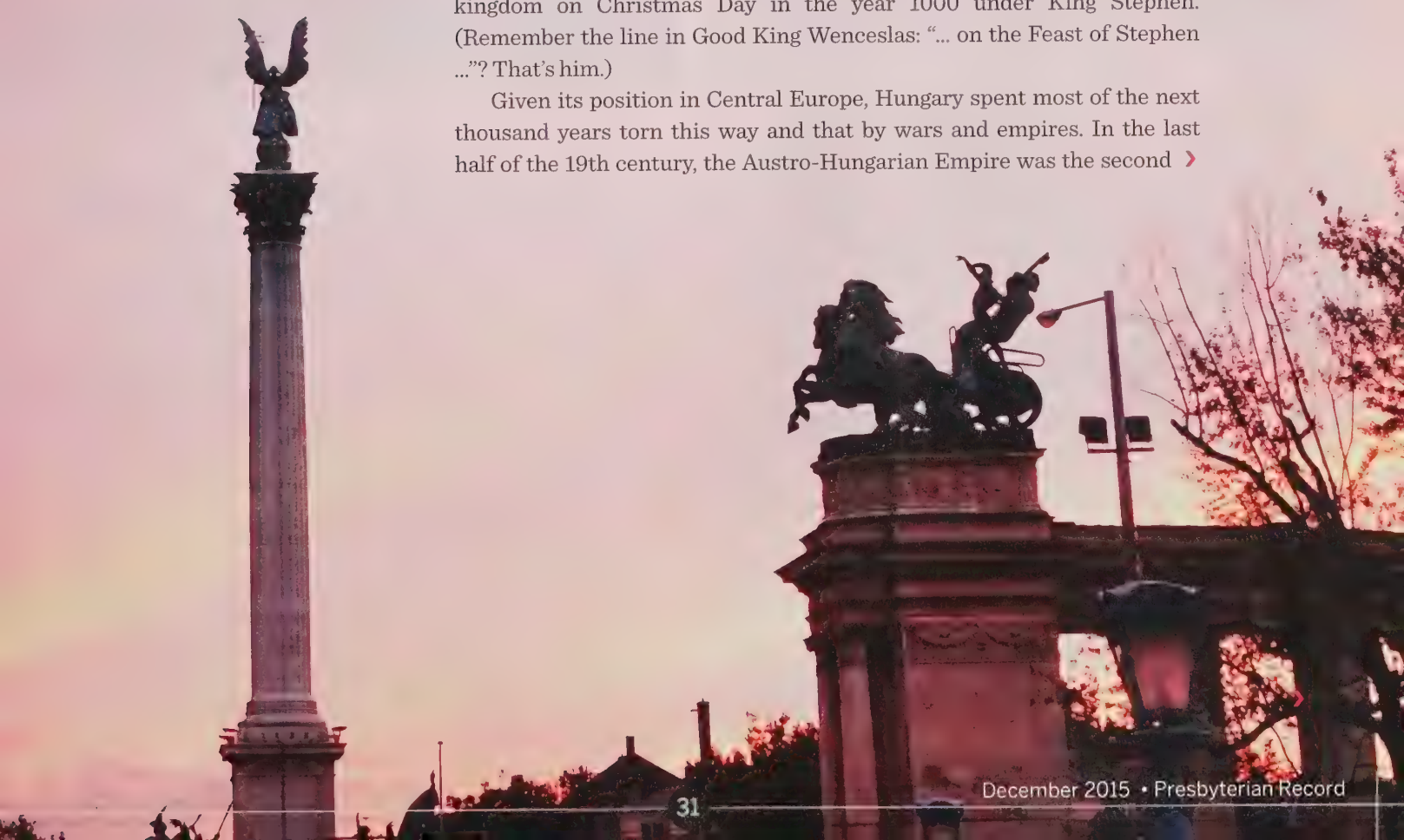
Story and photos by Andrew Faiz

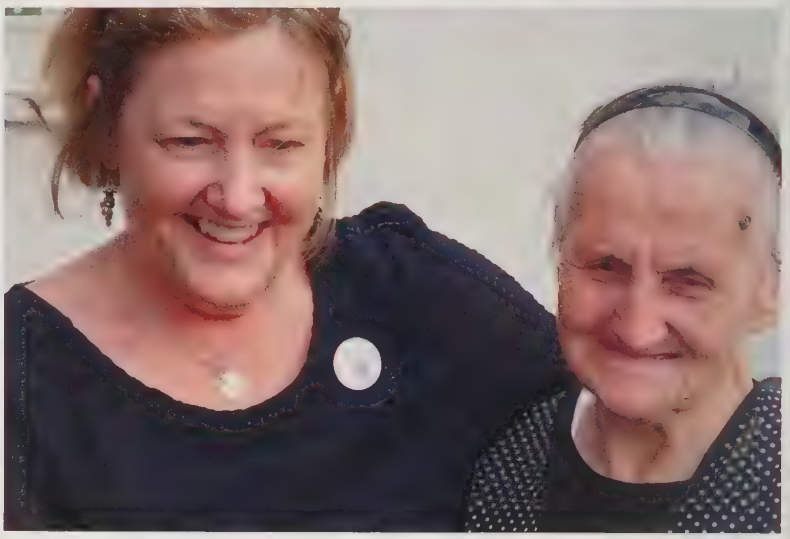
"If you come to Hungary, do not take our jobs," the government billboards scream—in Hungarian—a language Syrians cannot read. "If you come to Hungary, obey our laws." No outsiders welcome; at least not at the cost of the insiders.

In many ways Hungary is a young country. It is only a couple of decades old since the last occupiers left. Now standing on its own, it is trying to work out what it means to be Hungarian. Because it has an extraordinary history, one that is very much alive inside every citizen.

Hungary was founded as a principality in 895. It became a Christian kingdom on Christmas Day in the year 1000 under King Stephen. (Remember the line in Good King Wenceslas: "... on the Feast of Stephen ..."? That's him.)

Given its position in Central Europe, Hungary spent most of the next thousand years torn this way and that by wars and empires. In the last half of the 19th century, the Austro-Hungarian Empire was the second ›





From top left: Roma children, Ukraine.

Day care for Roma children, Ukraine.

The PCC's Glynis Williams with Jolan Katona, 82, at a seniors' home, Sarospatok, Hungary.

Williams, Rick Horst, Karen Horst, David Pandy-Szekeres, Anna Pandy-Szekeres.

Previous Page: Heroes' Square, Budapest.

largest (after Russia) in Europe.

Then came the First World War. Austria-Hungary was one of the central powers defeated by the Allies. In the aftermath, under the Treaty of Trianon, Hungary's borders were reduced by 71 per cent; its population by 68 per cent.

Hungarians now joke that Hungary is the only country surrounded by itself. There are sizeable Hungarian populations in all of the neighbouring states: Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Ukraine, Slovakia, Austria and Slovenia.

Turbulence followed. Hungary swung between Communism and Facism, initially siding with Germany in the Second World War, although Germany invaded Hungary in 1944 to ensure its loyalty. The Soviets arrived in 1945.

Nearly half a million Jews and 28,000 Roma died during the Second World War. Both of these minorities have been in Hungary for centuries. On top of which Hungary also lost nearly half a million soldiers and civilians. The Soviet era was also difficult: 150,000 Hungarians were imprisoned,

thousands were executed, many were deported to labour camps, many died, many were tortured, oppositional thinking was quashed, people treated as insects to maintain Stalin's rule.

A brief thaw in October 1956: *Time* magazine named the Hungarian Freedom Fighter its Man of the Year. Demonstrations across the country briefly relieved the Soviet chokehold. There were battles and the inevitable pushback. About 20,000 died in the Uprising against the Soviets.

Nearly a quarter million people left the country as refugees (many using the same routes deployed by Syrians today). Many came to Canada; they enriched the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

History is alive inside each Hungarian; all of its various versions co-exist in some mystical mashing of parallel universes. The memory of the great empire is alive alongside its eviscerated version; the 1956 Revolution is still felt; the Soviet era is fresh. Hungarians collaborated with the Nazis and the Soviets, and also pushed against them at the same time, suffering deeply under both powers. There are contradictions which are true.

The memory of the great empire is alive alongside its eviscerated version; the 1956 Revolution is still felt; the Soviet era is fresh

It is a fractured memory; proud, self-defensive, self protective; and also caring and careful. Something was ripped from the Hungarian heart in the Trianon Palace in Versailles in 1920. Since then they see themselves more as acted upon by tyrants and others, than acting. Perhaps that is why they seek to reclaim their Hungarian heritage and identity.

Laszlo Pandy escaped Hungary to save his life. He was a free thinker, a dangerous thing in the 1940s. He was caught, tortured for many months in a house of terror in Budapest. There was to be a trial to damn him for sedition against the state. His accusers never showed; he was released and he cut a path that many others would take six years later.

Through machinations that can only be understood as God's constant nudging, Pandy found himself with his wife in Canada in 1950, a farm worker, his body spent, his spirit low.

A saviour appeared in the form of Rev. Russell Hall, a Presbyterian minister. A deep friendship developed, and Pandy, a Reformed Christian from a Soviet nation that still held to its faith, went to seminary to become a minister of the Canadian Presbyterian Church.

His timing was fortuitous as refugees from his homeland arrived in Delhi, Ont. Along with his wife, Piroska, they nurtured many Hungarians in the church. They had four children.

Laszlo's son, Dr. David Pandy-Szekeres, has been a Presbyterian Church mission worker in Hungary and Ukraine for more than a decade. He was named recipient of the E.H. Johnson Award in 2001 for his outstanding missionary work.

Pandy-Szekeres has funded, founded, administered, managed and taught at many schools, daycares and seminaries. His wife, Anna, has been an instrumental part of many of these education ministries. Together they have birthed and rebirthed four Christian schools, and taught hundreds, many of whom are now pastors across Hungary and Ukraine.

Although raised in Canada, Pandy-Szekeres is very much a Hungarian, known equally well to bishops and villagers. He lives in the north-east town of Sarospatak and travels regularly to Ukraine. He is well known to border guards.

Pandy-Szekeres's work includes teaching at and supporting the 482-year-old Sarospatak Reformed Theological Academy. It was repurposed for five decades under Soviet rule, finally reopening as a Reformed high school and seminary in 1990.

Through other programs, and along with his wife, Pandy-Szekeres has touched (just to give one small example of his wide reaching ministry) the life of a young Roma woman who is the first in her family to learn to read and write. Working in a day care (supported by and through one of Pandy-Szekeres' various connections) and holding a baby in her lap, she proudly speaks about teaching her father to read and write, and expresses hopes she will one day become a teacher.

I was travelling with Rev. Karen Horst, moderator of this year's assembly, along with her husband Rev. Rick Horst (a past moderator) and Rev. Glynis Williams, associate secretary of International Ministries, and herself a moderator-nominee. Our host and driver was Dr. David Pandy-Szekeres.

As PCC delegates we saw how our denomination reaches deep into the many contradictions of the Hungarian soul, via Pandy-Szekeres, from the reconstitution of ancient institutions, particularly the presence and continued work of the Reformed Church of Hungary, to the opportunities and renewed lives given to the poor, the underprivileged and the ostracized. Not for the first time, in the company of our mission workers, I felt I was watching miracles unfold.

Andrew Faiz is the Record*'s senior editor.*

Escape from Pakistan

One family's story of faith, fear and flight to Canada.

/ Connie Wardle

It was a Friday, the day of *jumu'ah* or congregational prayer, and the Muslim staff at the bank in Gujranwala, Pakistan, headed to the nearby mosque. As usual, Farrukh Mustaq Gill stayed behind, using the quiet afternoon lull to catch up on work or take a bit of a break.

His family has been Presbyterian for generations, marking them among a small minority. Altogether Christians make up just 1.6 per cent of Pakistan's 152 million people. The vast majority—just over 96 per cent—are Muslims. But religion had rarely posed a problem for the Gill family until that afternoon in September of 2010.

The phone rang. It was Farrukh's father, Mushtaq Gill, who worked as a teacher and administrator at a Christian school in the city. "Can you come to my office right away?" he asked.

Farrukh arrived to find his father sitting in his office with three men. ›

En route to Canada.

The Gill family at their new home.

The Gill family: Standing are Fakhar and Farrukh, and sitting are Anaiah, Farzana, Imran, Mushtaq and Safdar. Absent is Fareeha.

"And those people were very strange," Farrukh recalled. "One of them was a small guy with a beard in Pakistani shalwar kameez. Two were very tall, broad, stern looking people. I thought what kind of people they are?"

They eventually said they were from Pakistan's Intelligence Bureau, the agency responsible for internal intelligence gathering and analysis. They had intercepted several letters addressed to mosques and madrasahs, all containing blasphemous material about the Prophet Muhammad and allegedly signed by Farrukh and Mushtaq.

It was a serious allegation. Under section 295-C of Pakistan's penal code, blasphemy against the Prophet Muhammad is punishable by death or life imprisonment.

And it doesn't take a conviction to endanger a person's life. Angry crowds have been known to beat and kill Christians and other religious minorities on the smallest hint of an accusation of blasphemy. One of the most notorious incidents was a riot on Aug. 1, 2009 in Gojra. At least 40 homes and a church were set on fire and eight Christians, including a seven-year-old child, were killed. Most of them were burned alive. In that case, it was alleged that a father and son had desecrated pages containing verses from the Qur'an.

"I told them I know the consequences of blasphemy," Farrukh said. "Blasphemy is a big issue in Pakistan. I'm a literate guy, I'm a professional, I have good relationships with the Muslims. Why would I do this?"

For a month, the Intelligence Bureau contacted the family frequently. Everyone was worried. Farrukh and his wife Farzana, a beautician, were expecting their first child. Farrukh and Mushtaq stopped going to their offices. What if someone learned about the letters? Were they in danger?

Then communication grew less frequent. Then it stopped. Slowly life returned more or less to normal. The family welcomed little Imran, a beautiful baby girl, into the world. Shortly afterward, Farrukh was promoted to the bank's regional office. "But in the back of our mind we still had that fear," he said.

It was well founded. On April 15, 2011, Mushtaq called while Farrukh was at home having lunch. "Don't go back to the bank," he said. "I'm coming with the police." Then he hung up.

The father and son were arrested and taken into protective custody. Blasphemous letters and burned pages from the Qur'an had been found outside the mosque near their home. Muslim leaders were stirring up the crowd after the Friday prayers, calling for the alleged blasphemers to be punished.

With Farrukh and Mushtaq in police custody, the rest of the family tried to flee. A Muslim neighbour warned them hundreds of people were coming and they would burn them if they didn't get out. Their Christian neighbours refused to take them in their cars, saying if they were seen to be involved then they might be attacked, too. Safdar, Mushtaq's wife, a nurse who had worked for about three decades in a hospital in the city, called another Muslim friend and he agreed to help them escape in his vehicle. Another friend gave them shelter.

From inside the police station, Mushtaq and Farrukh could hear the crowds. The police managed to keep the mob from burning their home, but other Christians in the neighbourhood fled.

Farrukh and Mushtaq spent the night in prison, worried they might be killed in custody, hoping and praying that their family was safe somewhere. A day later they were transferred to a facility where high profile criminals were imprisoned.

"Big walls, lots of policemen, lots of prisoners," Farrukh said. "When we entered we could hear someone being tortured."

They were placed in a large cell with about two-dozen other men, all of them Muslims, some of them radicals who had been arrested on terrorism charges. For a pair of Christians accused of blasphemy, it felt like a death sentence.

"Don't tell anybody you are Christian," Farrukh said a police officer told him. "Never tell anybody inside that you are here for blasphemy, otherwise they will kill you inside. Just keep calm, make a story, and try to spend the night, and the next morning we'll shift you to the nearby cell.

"I said no, we are not going to go because they will kill us. We cannot hide ourselves. We are not going to lie about being Christians. But we had to go. At that time we said don't worry, if God was with Daniel at the time he was in the lion's den then He's going to be with us when we are here. That's how we entered into that cell."

The other prisoners gathered around them, curious about why they were there. Farrukh and Mushtaq simply said they didn't know.

Their fellow prisoners speculated about what might have happened—maybe you lost a cellphone and someone used it to do something criminal, one suggested. They gave

'IF GOD WAS WITH DANIEL, THEN HE'S GOING TO BE WITH US'

Mushtaq pillows, sheets and food, because he was a teacher and thus highly respected. They assured them there was probably some mistake and they would be released soon. They called them their guests. "It was a miracle," Mushtaq said.

The other prisoners were not quite as happy when they woke Farrukh and Mushtaq for the morning prayer the next day and discovered they wouldn't pray with them because they were Christians. But they let them be. The next day, the two men were moved.

The rest of the family were placed under house arrest. They were brought to the prison each day. Sometimes the police would interrogate family members together, sometimes individually. Every few days they would be moved to a new house to keep them safe.

"Outside there was a lot of danger for us," Farzana said with her husband, Farrukh, translating. "We had very little. We were dependent on people for everything."

Imran was only five months old and Farzana was expecting their second child. They had made so many plans for their little girl. If Farrukh was killed inside, what would life be like for her? How would she manage? Farzana wiped tears from her eyes as she spoke.

"I could see only darkness. It was hopeless at that time."

On the 21st of April, five days after they had been imprisoned, Farrukh was taken to the torture room.

"I had no idea where they were taking me," he said. ›

"But somehow in my heart I knew something bad was going to happen. Every day we used to hear people crying in pain and agony as they were tortured. And whenever we used to hear this, one thing would always come into our mind: Tomorrow it would be us."

They shone a bright light to keep him awake, he said. They would contort his body in painful positions and beat him with rods.

From the cell downstairs, his father could hear him when he cried out.

'MY FATHER USED TO HEAR AND PRAY FOR ME,' FARRUKH RECALLED. 'HE USED TO SING PSALMS LOUDLY; I COULD HEAR IT DURING THIS [TORTURE] AND THAT GAVE ME A BIT OF STRENGTH'

"He used to hear and pray for me," Farrukh recalled. "He used to sing psalms loudly; I could hear it during this and that gave me a bit of strength to move on. But I kept on saying to them I have not done this. But they were saying you will accept it one day."

On the fifth day he broke down. "That day I decided I'm not going to take any more suffering. I said okay fine, stop this, I will accept even though I haven't done this. There is no other choice for me." He signed a confession. By taking responsibility he hoped the police might let his father and the rest of his family go.

But then their second miracle occurred. The inspector in charge of their case—a man Farrukh said was notorious for his cruelty and efficiency in extracting confessions—was transferred. The new inspector wasn't happy with the work that had been done on the case, and set about interviewing people about the Gills, getting the opinion of psychologists and handwriting experts who compared samples of their writing with the blasphemous letters.

Beyond the walls of the prison, a rumour got out that the two men were going to be found innocent and released. Suddenly new letters surfaced, these ones allegedly written by Farrukh's brother Fakhar and sister Fareeha, and this time they were accompanied by an entire charmarked Qur'an. But unbeknownst to the perpetrator, both the siblings were under house arrest.

People were outraged. Houses, a church and a Christian school were attacked, and members of the crowd clashed with police. About 100 people were arrested.

One of the Gills' Muslim neighbours was among those arrested in the aftermath. A couple of boys told police he had given them the letters and burned Qur'an pages that they placed outside of the mosque back on April 15.

"In Pakistan this is a normal thing," Farrukh said. The country's blasphemy laws are often used to settle personal vendettas, or to force families to leave their homes and sell their property.

The culprit confessed. But the case still posed a problem for the police. The allegations against the Gills had already prompted riots. Would people really believe the Christians were innocent and a Muslim committed the blasphemy? They didn't think so.

The Gills were released on June 2, but the police advised them not to go home. They wouldn't be able to guarantee their safety if they stayed in Gujranwala. Instead, they advised them to go to a remote area, change their names, try their best to ensure no one connected them with the blasphemy allegations. The story had been widely publicized, along with pictures of Farrukh and Mushtaq. It would be hard to escape.

Thus began a nomadic existence, moving from place to place, never staying too long in someone's home lest the stigma of the blasphemy allegations rub off on their hosts.

Their escape from Pakistan might be another miracle. A rich Korean businesswoman, whom they had never met before or since, visited Pakistan on a mission trip and offered to help them get to Vietnam and pay their expenses for one year. They met her and her group in secret the night before Christmas Eve.

They flew out on Jan. 18, 2012 with newly minted passports. They even met an old friend on the plane—Rev. Sampson Javaid who now lives in Toronto.

In Vietnam they were provided with a house and jobs at a garment factory that produced clothing for Forever 21 and assorted other brands. It was a relief for Farrukh and Mushtaq to be able to leave the house during the day and live their lives without the constant shadow of fear. Yet the future remained unknown.

Farrukh began to explore possibilities. His web of connections expanded across the globe. People he knew referred him to other people they knew. Those people

connected him with yet more people who might be able to help. Eventually, he got in touch with Rob Shropshire, program coordinator with Presbyterian World Service & Development, and began exploring the possibility of the family coming to Canada as refugees.

But there was a big complication. There was no way the family could be resettled from Vietnam. They would have to move to another country to seek refugee status with the UNHCR, the United Nations' refugee agency.

They decided on Sri Lanka where there would be more English speakers. And through their web of connections the Gills were able to stay for eight months in a house owned by the World Evangelical Alliance, paying only for their first month. The Barnabas Fund also pitched in to help support them for a year.

To be certified as refugees by the UNHCR they needed to prove the family had no choice but to flee Pakistan and that they would face persecution if they returned. Farrukh in Sri Lanka and Rob Shropshire in Canada went to work on the application.

The process is long and often tedious, full of seemingly endless forms. Both the refugee and sponsor's paperwork must be submitted together to Citizenship and Immigration Canada's processing office. Both of these applications can be returned if they are found to contain errors or omissions. The refugees' stories should be backed up whenever possible with newspaper clippings and other supporting documentation. In this case it meant four copies of everything. While the church's national offices were closed for the Christmas holidays, Shropshire spent a lot of time hunched over a photocopier.

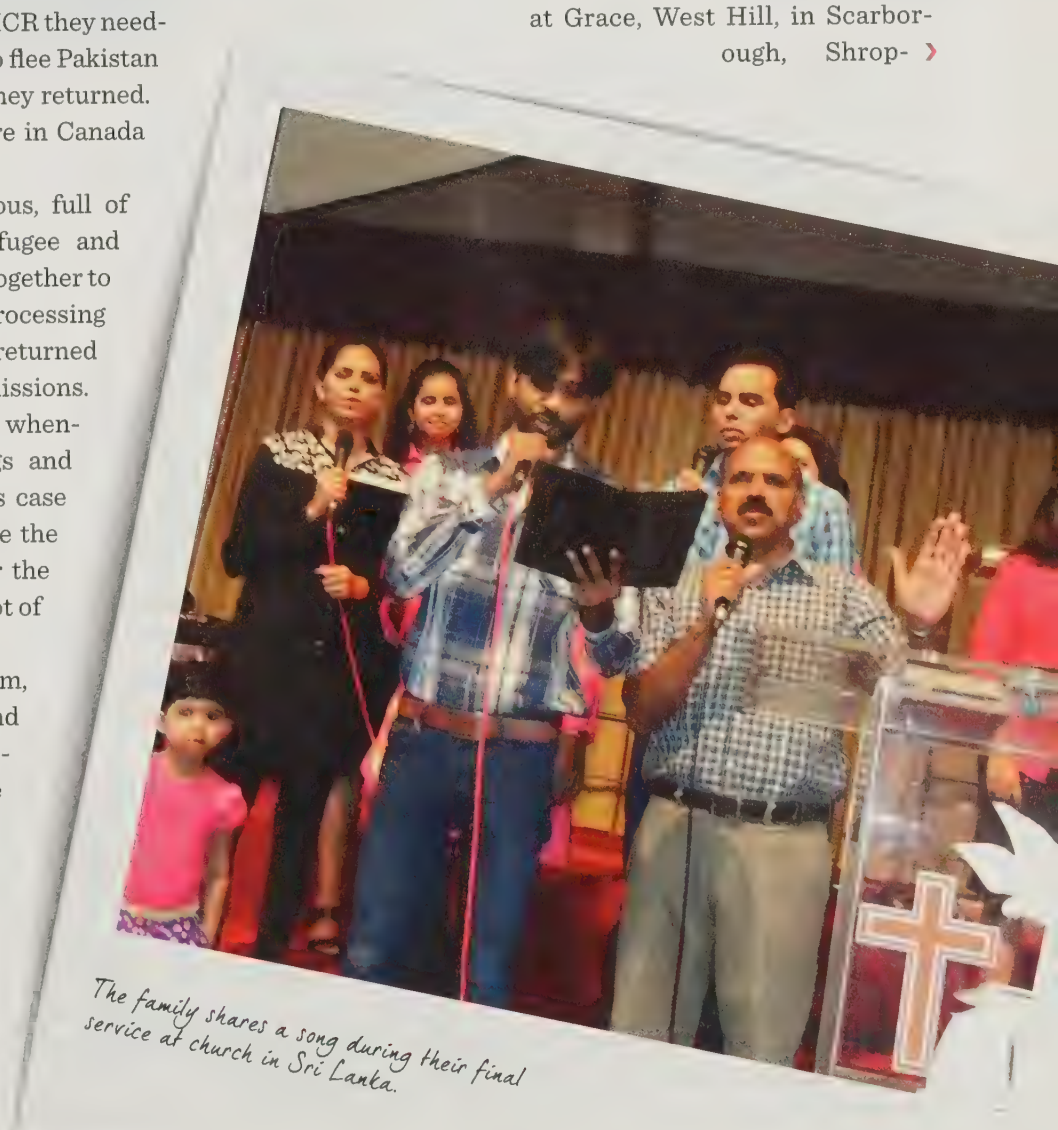
He and Farrukh worked as a team, Shropshire said. As a well-educated and fluent English speaker, Farrukh had a distinct advantage as he learned to navigate the twisting avenues of governments and refugee agencies.

"Not everyone has bureaucratic literacy," Shropshire noted. And if refugees lack printed documentation to confirm their identities and back up their story, gaining refugee status is even harder.

It wasn't an issue for the Gills, however. Their story had been plastered across newspapers and websites in Pakistan, and Farrukh had hung on to every letter and piece of paper he thought could prove useful down the line—including a personal letter from someone at the Canadian High Commission.

In Canada, Shropshire had to find a church willing to sponsor them. It would require a significant financial commitment to support a family of eight for a year (about $40,000), and in addition there would need to be logistical and social support. The Gills would need a home, furniture, rides to appointments and shopping, help getting their paperwork submitted to various government departments, registering the kids for school and finding work. There are a thousand little and not-so-little things to do.

But when he found out the Gills had an uncle at Grace, West Hill, in Scarborough, Shrop- ›



The family shares a song during their final service at church in Sri Lanka.

shire said it didn't take long for the missions committee to get on board.

The church has two congregations—one English-speaking and one Urdu-speaking. Rev. Joseph Gray who heads the English congregation said when their uncle, Alvin James, got together with Rev. Emmanuel Shaker, a retired Anglican priest and founder of the Urdu-speaking congregation, and Rev. Sampson Javaid, the friend the Gills met again on the plane to Vietnam, "it seemed like a no-brainer."

Just as things finally seemed to be falling into place, however, unease settled over the Gill family again. Sri Lanka began cracking down on asylum seekers—especially those from Pakistan. Many people were detained and some were deported.

'The fact that they already had their sponsorship filed was very important," Shropshire said. He began writing letters to places like the Canadian High Commission and to the UNHCR's offices in Geneva, pleading for the Gills' refugee sponsorship case to be expedited lest they get caught up in the Sri Lankan police sweeps.

"We are here first because of God's grace and secondly because of the efforts of Mr. Rob Shropshire," Farrukh said. "He did whatever he could to save us. And thank God we were saved and nobody ever harmed us and nobody ever came to our door."

When they finally had their refugee interview with the UNHCR and found out it was successful, "I cannot tell you the emotions of the family at that time," Farrukh said. "We were crying, weeping in joy. Because we had gone through a lot and it was probably the first time we know we are going to go to a place and call it our home."

They arrived in Canada on February 25 of this year—more than four years since their troubles began.

Mushtaq insists miracles punctuated their long journey. When he reads the Old Testament, he thinks of his family's four years of trials and the Israelites' 40 years of wandering in the desert. The stories of difficult journeys speak to him.

"God told to Abraham wherever you will go I will bless you," he said. "Not only you, the people who live there. I will bless the peoples also. I have seen the blessing in my own eyes when we went to a country."

Farrukh said wherever they went, whatever happened, people have come out of nowhere to help them. And they have shared their testimony often.

Joseph Gray said he was among many who wept hearing Mushtaq's testimony with the Urdu congregation, though he couldn't understand a word. "It was like a foretaste of the day when every tribe, every tongue, every nation will worship together."

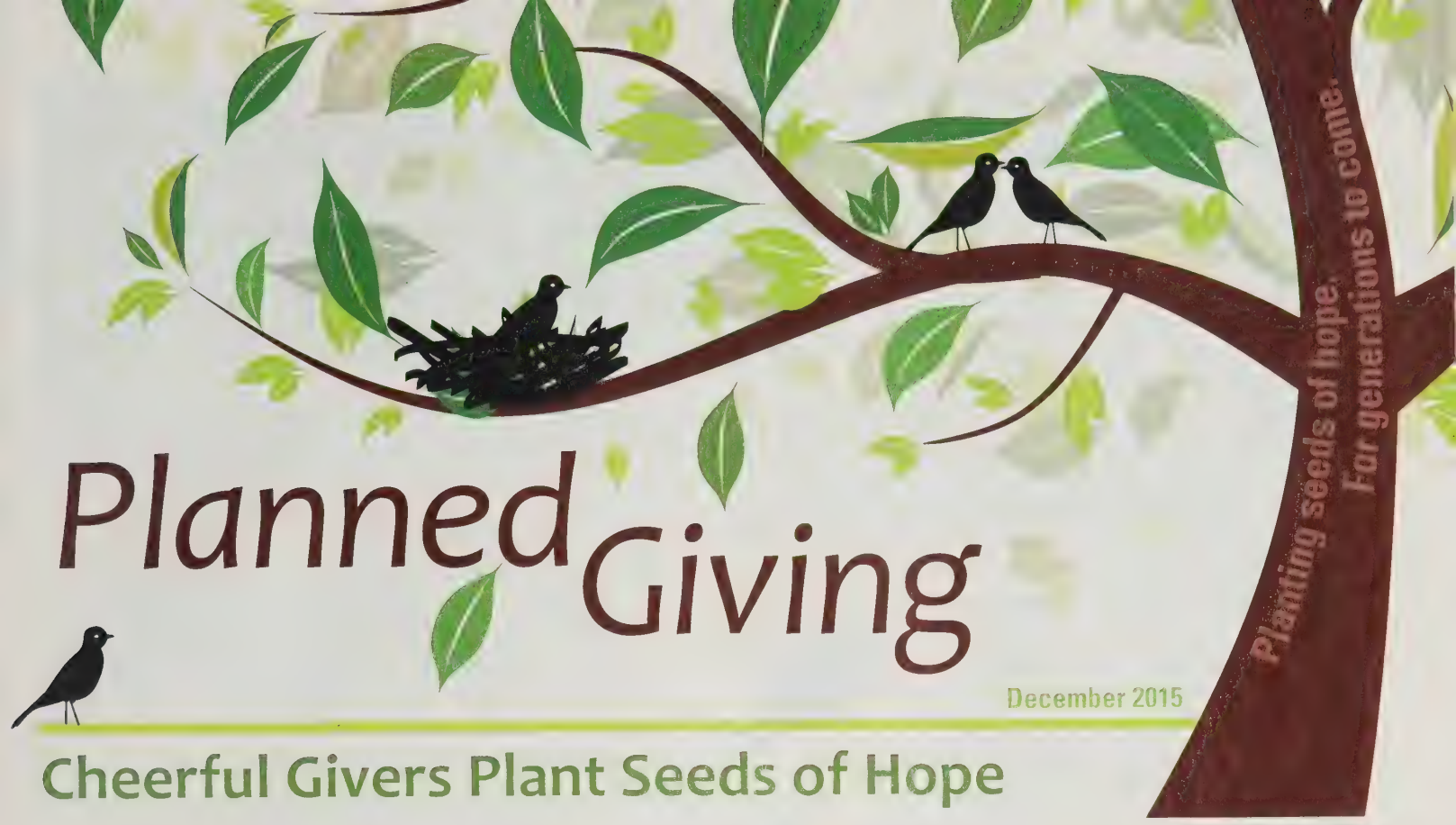
Rob Shropshire and Mushtaq Gill

But the story isn't over. Although they have finally reached a country where they can feel safe, where they have the support of friends and family, the Gills are all too keenly aware that many Christians just like them are in hiding or seeking status as refugees. And they know just how difficult that can be.

"I've got to say, churches here are sleeping," Farrukh said. "People should first see how God works in our lives. Plus people should wake up now. Terrible things are happening over there. If we have resources over here or in other countries, if we have any chance to help these families we will definitely help them."

It's too easy for Canadians to keep an emotional distance. Gray said when he thinks of our perceptions in Canada, he thinks of "those verses in Deuteronomy where God is about to take the people of Israel into a land flowing with milk and honey and He says, 'Now be careful. I'm about to take you into a land where you'll have beautiful houses. Houses you didn't build and wells you didn't dig and vineyards you didn't plant. Now be really careful because when you go into this beautiful land, when your bellies are full, you'll forget the Lord your God.' It's such a great warning. When you meet people like this you're reminded that we're largely sleepwalking in Canada."

Connie Wardle is the Record*'s senior writer.*



Planned Giving

December 2015

Cheerful Givers Plant Seeds of Hope

"The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work." – 2 Corinthians 9:6–8, NRSV

In their retirement, Margaret and David Craig have discovered a new purpose and a new joy: learning how to give a portion of the wealth they have accumulated over the course of their lives to the ministries closest to their hearts. Margaret served as a deaconess in The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) and as a nurse and nurse educator in Canada and Papua New Guinea. David, a retired Certified Management Consultant, was involved in strategic planning in both the public and private sectors. They have both served as elders in the PCC and volunteers in the church and community, and they are now active members of Calvin Presbyterian Church in Halifax, NS. Their interest in and commitment to missions was greatly influenced by their families' involvement in the church, the Women's Missionary Society, the Atlantic Mission Society, as well as other charitable organizations and community service.

They have also been inspired by stories like the ones of George and Evelyn van Beek, who established the Avondbloem Experimental Fund in their retirement years, and Ron and Muriel Bremner, who in their senior years established a $1 million endowment for the PCC in memory of Ron's parents.

As lifelong Presbyterians with a heart for mission, Margaret and David knew they wanted their primary charitable giving to support the mission work of the PCC both now and in the future, but they couldn't decide how to focus their generosity; and so they embarked on a journey of exploration and discovery. Their mission: to discover how they could maximize their giving and channel their gifts in the most strategic way for the greatest impact.

They liked what they read about the PCC's Mission Priority Funds, but the Craigs couldn't make up their minds about which of the funds to support. After consulting with Herb Gale, the Associate Secretary for Planned Giving, David and Margaret established the *Priorities for Mission Fund*—a new fund that will channel financial support to any or all of the Mission Priority Funds, wherever it is most needed in any given year.

The Craig's initial contribution was a gift of mutual funds from their non-registered investment portfolio. They have also pledged to contribute additional gifts to the fund in future years, including the proceeds from a life insurance policy. The capital is invested in the PCC's Consolidated Portfolio which will continue to grow their investment over time while providing annual revenue for the various Mission Priority Funds. A Gift Agreement setting out the parameters for the fund was signed by the Craigs and representatives of the PCC in July of 2015.

Part of the learning process for the Craigs included being linked up with a financial planner who understands charitable giving and is helping them utilize the tax laws in Canada to maximize their gifts. He has shown them the tax advantages of giving part of their estate while they are

living rather than waiting to do so through their wills. He has also helped them to see that such tax-wise giving is all part of being a good steward.

As Margaret explains, "David contributed generously to RRSPs during his working life, but there comes a time when you will be taxed on what has been accumulating tax-free. We have learned that if we were to die tomorrow, half of our retirement savings would go to the government in taxes. Our goal is not to avoid paying taxes, but to use tax laws to enable us to give more to the church and to charity. Our government wants us to do just that—to give more for charitable work in Canada. Our financial planner has told us that it is really about deciding whether we want to be '*involuntary* philanthropists' (allowing the government to direct where our wealth will go through taxes) or '*voluntary* philanthropists' (partnering with the government to redirect much of what would have gone to taxes to the charities we support)." The Craigs decided that they want to be voluntary philanthropists and faithful stewards of what God has given them: "Using the tax laws the way they were designed to be used is one way of multiplying our giving."

But even more exciting to them is God's role in the whole process and "how God's love can multiply the effects of our generosity." In so saying, the Craigs are echoing the words of Henri Nouwen in his book, *A Spirituality of Fundraising*, which they found deeply meaningful and expanded their understanding of stewardship. "In reading the booklet, we realized that fundraising really is spiritual. Nouwen relates it back to God, who give us all that we have. When we share our wealth, we are giving back to God."

> When Jesus fed five thousand people with only five loaves and two fish, he was showing us how God's love can multiply the effects of our generosity (see Matthew 14:13–21). God's kingdom is the place of abundance where every generous act overflows its original bounds and becomes part of the unbounded grace of God at work in the world (see 2 Corinthians 9:10–15).
>
> — Henri Nouwen, *A Spirituality of Fundraising*

David and Margaret were initially hesitant to share their story. They did not wish to draw attention to themselves, but then they realized it was others' stories that have inspired them. In establishing the fund, the Craigs are putting their values, vision and mission into action. They hope that others will be inspired by their story and will also contribute to the fund. Perhaps Margaret said it best:

> "We are planting the initial seeds, and we hope they will grow. We can't even venture the thought that the fund won't grow. We are so hopeful that God will provide the growth. We hope that others will say, 'I can do a little bit, too, and my little bit can become more.' We can't keep this to ourselves. It's good news, and the church and the world are so in need of good news and hope. We are simply the ambassadors of this good news. All the glory belongs to Christ."

Parting Words from Herb Gale

Herb has been serving the PCC as the Associate Secretary for Planned Giving since June of 2004. In September of this year the Planned Giving Department and Stewardship Department were merged into one department—The Stewardship and Planned Giving Department. Karen Plater, Associate Secretary for Stewardship, and Herb Gale are providing joint leadership for this department until Herb retires at the end of 2015. Then there will be one Associate Secretary.

I would like to thank the PCC for giving me the opportunity to serve the church in Planned Giving over the past eleven years. Mine has been a happy task—helping the most generous people in the church and in Canada to leave enduring legacies for the church and its ministry, and working with congregations and specialized ministries to help them receive those gifts and utilize them most effectively. It has also been my joy to work with dedicated staff, who have understood their work in the Planned Giving Office less as a job and more as a ministry and a calling.

The ministry of planned giving is very much a work of planting and harvesting. That's why the tagline for the planned giving ministry in the PCC is "Planting seeds of hope. For generations to come." Sometimes we are the ones planting the seeds that others will harvest. Sometimes we are the ones harvesting crops grown from the seeds others have planted. But whoever plants and whoever harvests, it is really God, the great Gift Planner, who provides both the initial impetus and the growth. The apostle Paul put it this way in his first letter to the Corinthians when he was comparing his own ministry with that of Apollos: "So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth" (1 Corinthians 3:7). May the God of lavish generosity provide abundant growth so that future generations can enjoy a rich harvest of unimaginable blessings!

The Priorities for Mission Fund

Growing the Church's Mission Today and Tomorrow

The Priorities for Mission Fund provides seed money for the mission priorities of the Presbyterian Church in Canada both now and in the future. The PCC's Life and Mission Agency (LMA) has created six funds to channel planned gifts into vitally needed areas of ministry and mission called Mission Priority Funds. It is expected that these funds will change over time as the PCC's ministry needs and opportunities change. The Priorities for Mission Fund is designed to be a big basket fund that will allocate 10% of its total value each year into any one or more of the LMA's Mission Priority Funds, which are presently in existence or that may be added in the future. The LMA Committee will direct the annual disbursements into the areas of greatest need and opportunity.

Creative Ministry with Children and Youth Fund

To provide congregations and other groups within the church with additional money for expanding their ministry with children and youth.

Growing Churches Fund

To help presbyteries in their work of planting new congregations using new models of church growth and to offer strategic support to those engaged in new church development.

Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Fund

To provide professional church workers with the support they need to function optimally in the midst of the stresses of pastoral ministry in a rapidly changing world.

Living Links Missionary Endowment Fund

To ensure ongoing support for the appointment of long-term international mission staff living and working with our partner churches and agencies around the world.

Mission Connections Fund

To facilitate short-term exposure tours and volunteer mission experiences with our international mission partners.

Healing & Reconciliation—The Journey Continues Fund

To support local initiatives for Presbyterians to build stronger relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada so that the journey of healing and reconciliation continues.

If you would like to learn more about these funds and how your planned gifts can expand the mission of the church for generations to come, contact the Stewardship and Planned Giving Department or visit the PCC's website at www.presbyterian.ca/mission-priority-funds. Printed brochures providing additional information on the Mission Priority Funds are available free of charge from the Stewardship and Planned Giving Department.

Jesus also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.

— Mark 4:30–32, NRSV

In Lieu of Flowers: A Legacy of Welcome

"I was a stranger and you welcomed me."
– Matthew 25:25

Lorna van Mossel and her husband, the Rev. Bert van Mossel, always believed that authentic Christian faith must be expressed in practical acts of compassion and justice.

They were strong supporters of Presbyterian World Service & Development (PWS&D) and had a deep concern for the plight of refugees around the world. Lorna and Bert frequently opened their home and provided hospitality to refugees and immigrants who were beginning new lives in Canada.

In light of their parents' long-standing commitment to welcoming refugees and strangers and wanting to contribute towards future support for refugee work, Lorna and Bert's six children worked with PWS&D and the Planned Giving Department to create a fund in honour of their parents.

The van Mossel Refugee Support Fund was established upon Lorna's death in June 2014 as a named fund of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, administered by PWS&D. Any money raised by the fund is dedicated to supporting PWS&D's work with refugees. At Lorna's funeral and in the obituary for their mother, the family invited contributions to the van Mossel Fund in lieu of flowers.

Since its creation, over $12,000 has been contributed to the fund which has been directed to the most needed areas within PWS&D's refugee portfolio—including urgent humanitarian assistance to refugees overseas and providing support to Canadian congregations interested in sponsorship. It's amazing how much money can be raised and how much good can be done, simply by adding the words, "in lieu of flowers"!

The van Mossel Refugee Support Fund is item #PWREF01 in the PCC's 2015-16 Gifts of Change catalogue, which can be downloaded online at www.presbyterian.ca/pwsd/donate/gifts-of-change.

presbyterian.ca/pg
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FROM THE MODERATOR

Faith That Sticks

Finding new ways to minister to families. By Karen Horst

Proverbs 22:6: *"Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray."*

How we love to see Joseph and Mary in pint-size! At Christmas, some longingly look back to the days when our Sunday schools were full and teacher volunteers were plentiful. Back then I had the privilege of working on design teams for church school curricula to be used by a variety of denominations. I worked alongside Dr. Sara P. Little, Dr. Roger Nishioka, Dr. Maria Harris and Dr. Walter Brueggemann as we strategized how we might structure study materials so that they would reflect what people needed to learn from the cradle to the grave.

Yet, in spite of the finest scholars involved and the best pedagogy going, our churches are not filled with students who came through the system. You may have had a bursting church school back in the '60s, but the great majority of these now grown up participants no longer go to church.

We can blame secularization, sports and frayed family schedules. All these dynamics would be true, but even more we have now learned that the critical place for learning is not the limited time we have on a Sunday morning but rather in the concentrated times we demonstrate a sincere love to children, youth and their parents.

The Fuller Institute has discerned that sound faith development happens in the context of abiding and caring relationships. We should do our best

WESLEY BATES/3INABOX

to encourage a faith that "sticks" by being fully involved in the lives of our children, youth and adults, helping them understand and experience how Christ is active in their lives. It can happen in home instruction, youth groups, retreats, camps and even on Sunday mornings.

Our goal is to encourage a faith that is both internalized and externalized; a faith that goes soul deep and is expressed in choices and actions and a faith that is both personal and communal, where personal spiritual growth and care for the larger community and world is demonstrated. As we encourage faith in others we seek and demonstrate maturity and a willingness to keep growing.

Rhyming off the books of the Bible does not mean faith has been integrated. A pin that reflects your perfect attendance at Sunday school is no measure of your quality of faith. Ultimately, faith has stuck when you have integrated it into every breathing moment, every choice and action. Faith has stuck when one is seeking to honour Jesus Christ.

Exciting experiments are being carried out in our own denomination to achieve depth of faith. More and more midweek opportunities are drawing families and their children to grow spiritually. Churches are providing ways families can encourage faith development in their homes on a daily basis. Some churches are investing in young people with plenty of one-on-one time rather than broad programs.

It's time to reinvent ourselves instead of longing for a past model that no longer works—and perhaps never did. It's time to share our own faith so they can see our deep devotion and love of Christ in what we say and do. It's time to listen to younger families regarding their spiritual and practical needs and be there for them rather than expecting them to fit into our structures and models. Build it and they will not come. Truly care, listen and modify yourselves to minister to their needs and you will find faith blossoming and becoming a lifelong reality. Through open, agenda-free relationships, faith can stick into eternity.

Be sure to read *Sticky Faith: Everyday Ideas to Build Lasting Faith in your Kids* by Kara E. Powell and Dr. Chap Clark.

Rev. Karen Horst is minister at St. Andrew's, Orillia, Ont.

People & Places

Find more online at presbyterianrecord.ca

Photographs can be uploaded at presbyterianrecord.ca.

PRESBYTERY OF PICKERING, ONT.

Rev. Dr. Everett Briard (front and centre) has been a member of the Presbytery of Pickering for as long as it has existed. He attended its inaugural meeting on Jan. 7, 1990, served for 17 of the last 25 years as clerk, and finally retired with much thanks and fanfare. In good Presbyterian fashion, by motion of the court, he was bestowed with the honorary title of minister emeritus in recognition of his faithful service.

FIRST, PENETANGUISHENE, ONT.

On Sept. 13, the congregation at First dedicated the brand new addition to their church building. Shirley Spearn, clerk of session, and Rev. Mark Wolfe, minister, had the honour of cutting the ribbon and officially opening the new facility. It represents many years of faith, hope and love—not to mention generosity—on the part of the congregation.

ST. DAVID'S, ST. JOHN'S, NFLD.

With encouragement from the congregation's Atlantic Mission Society group, St. David's gathered and donated three bins full of toiletries and personal care items to Thrive, a community network. These items will be provided to vulnerable people as one of the many forms of support offered through the organization's Street Reach program.

THE OTHER SIX DAYS

A Hug How-To (or Not-To)

And other things to learn online. By Bradley Childs

"Ten Most Awkward Hugs" (found on YouTube).

VIDEO

Now I've mentioned Blimey Cow before but I really like this video so I'm going to send you there again. This time the Taylor brothers have tackled that strange reality known as the hug. From those "Too Long" hugs to the "Stranger" hug, we've probably all been in a not-so-comfortable hugging situation. Here the boys remind the viewers of 10 odd hugs that seem to creep their way into everyone's lives from time to time. Be honest, you know exactly what I mean.

FIND IT @ **youtube.com. Search the Blimey Cow channel for "Ten Most Awkward Hugs."**

INTERFAITH COMMUNITY

The Tri-Faith Initiative is a West Omaha, Nebraska, project between three different worshipping communities from the Abrahamic tradition. As the name suggests, there are three partners: Temple Israel, the American Muslim Institute and the church where my sister is on the board, Countryside Community Church (a congregation of the United Church of Christ). The Tri-Faith Initiative is currently in the building stages. It is a shared campus with three different houses of worship plus one central and shared space meant to foster greater communication and respect while maintaining each religion's unique voice.

FIND IT @ **trifaith.org.**

WEBSITE

God and Stuff is a pretty good site. With the tagline, "Christianity: Not Just for Old People" they've got to be good, right? The creator is a high school dropout and Bible-college-kicked-out (but then again, so was I ... don't worry, they reversed the error and I got back in). Now it's fair to say that this fellow has some weak spots in his armour and certainly he is a bit on the charismatic side but overall he has great insights and is a lot of fun. Check out titles like, "If we are false Christians would we know it," or go to his Evangelism 101 tab for "If Christianity has not changed your life, you are doing it wrong."

FIND IT @ **godandstuff.com.**

MOVIE

I love B-movies. Bruce Campbell is my favourite actor of all time. I also love odd stories. Those big blockbuster films are so predictable. Why not have dinosaurs from outer space time travel to colonial New England in order to save the world from a bizarre-o alternate reality version of George Washington? Why not?! Movies don't all have to be Oscar-worthy; they just have to be fun! The truth is, a "good" bad movie is a great way to get a laugh. Now combine that good ol' *Plan 9 from Outer Space*-loving attitude with the fact that for some reason conservative Christians love to make bad knockoffs of popular things and, boom! You've got yourself a terrible copy of the 2006 smash hit *High School Musical*. Now just swap out Zac Efron and Ashley Tisdale for some random folks from your mega-church and out pops this gem of a flick from Faith Films aptly titled *Sunday School Musical*. Yeah, they got all creative. This thing is 93 minutes of cringe-worthy youth group fun. Just, you know ... watch it ironically. It is soooo bad. I love it!

FIND IT @ **amazon.com, or watch the trailer on youtube.com.**

Rev. Bradley Childs is minister at First, Regina.

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Synod of the Atlantic Provinces

Tabusintac, N.B., St. John's; New Jersey, Zion; and Bartibog Bridge, St. Matthew's: Full-time three-point charge; Interim Moderator Rev. J. Gillis Smith, 535 King George Hwy., Miramichi, NB E1V 1N2; rachmsmi@nbnet.nb.ca.

Synod of Quebec and Eastern Ontario

No vacancies at this time.

Synod of Central, Northeastern Ontario and Bermuda

Ashburn, Burns; Interim Moderator Rev. Andrew Allison, PO Box 104, Leaskdale ON L0C 1C0; 905-852-5921; a.allison@saintpauls.ca.

Bobcaygeon, Knox; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Barney Grace, PO Box 465, Beaverton ON L0K 1A0; 705-426-1097; revbarney@sympatico.ca.

Brampton, North Bramalea; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Geoff Ross; 905-451-1723; geoff@standrewsbrampton.ca.

Kitchener, St. Andrew's; Full-time associate minister of pastoral care; Presbytery Representative (Interim Moderator) Rev. Angus Sutherland; 519-740-6435; ajmacbagpipe@yahoo.com.

Palmerston, Knox; Full-time new grad/three-quarter time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Kathy Morden, 135 Elora St. S., Harriston ON N0G 1Z0; 519-321-1942; kcpc-revkathy@wightman.ca.

Synod of Southwestern Ontario

Ancaster, St. Andrew's; Full-time mininster; Interim Moderator Rev. Anne Yee-Hibbs; 35 Giffin Rd., Dundas, ON L9N 7N5; 905-627-9080; ayhibbs@gmail.com.

Bayfield, Knox; Part-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. John Henderson, PO Box 824, Exeter, ON N0M 1S6; 519-235-2608; henderson.johncharles@gmail.com.

Fingal, Knox; Half-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Ed Hoekstra, 970 Oxford St. W., London, ON N6H 1V4; 519-471-2290 extension 222; ehoekstra@oakridge.london.on.ca.

Ingersoll, St. Paul's; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Mark McLennan, 59 Riddell St., Woodstock, ON N4S 6M2; 519-537-2962; roundrev@rogers.com.

Mooretown, St. Andrew's and Moore, Knox; Full-time ministry in a rural two-point charge; Interim Moderator Rev. Shirley F. Murdock; 914-1275 Sandy Lane, Sarnia, ON N7V 4H5; 519-491-9892; sfm.rev@gmail.com.

Port Dover, Knox; Part-time (60%); Interim Moderator Rev. Bob Sim, 145 Hawkswood Trail, Hamilton ON L9B 2R5; 905-921-5667; revbobsim@gmail.com.

Synod of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario

Winnipeg, Man., Kildonan Community; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Matthew Brough; 204-803-7743; matt@prairiechurch.ca.

Synod of Saskatchewan

No vacancies at this time.

Synod of Alberta and the Northwest

No vacancies at this time.

Synod of British Columbia

Burnaby, Burnaby Taiwanese; Full-time minister; Interim Moderator Rev. Dr. Glen Davis; gjidavis@telus.net. ›

Richmond, Richmond Presbyterian; Interim Moderator Rev. Bruce Dayton, 705-5050 Halifax St., Burnaby, BC V5B 2N5; 604-277-5410; dbd99dbd@gmail.com; For full details on the position, application and our church/congregation/community please visit the congregational profile link at richpres.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Richmond-Presbyterian-Church-Congregational-Profile-2015-July-13-2015.pdf.

Vancouver, Fairview: Minister of Word and Sacraments who can help make and nurture disciples of Jesus Christ who seek to reflect his light and share his love in their daily lives; Interim Moderator Rev. Martin Baxter; c/o St. Andrew's & St. Stephen's Presbyterian Church, 2641 Chesterfield Ave., North Vancouver, BC V7N 3M3; 604-987-6800; pastormbaxter@gmail.com; profile at fairviewchurch.ca.

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obituaries

Wilson, Marion, died peacefully with her family at her side at VON Sakura House, July 19, 2015. Marion was a lifelong member of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Ingersoll, Ont.

As a registered nurse she worked at the Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial Hospital for 29 years, first as the operating room supervisor and then as the infection control officer. On her retirement she returned to Ingersoll and immersed herself in God's service at St. Paul's.

Marion was a trailblazer. She served as board chair at a time when major renovations at the manse were needed. She was a trustee on the Memorial Trust and supported dispensing money responsibly when the need arose. She was elected the first woman elder at St. Paul's and brought wisdom and balance to the court.

In all things Marion was a willing servant.

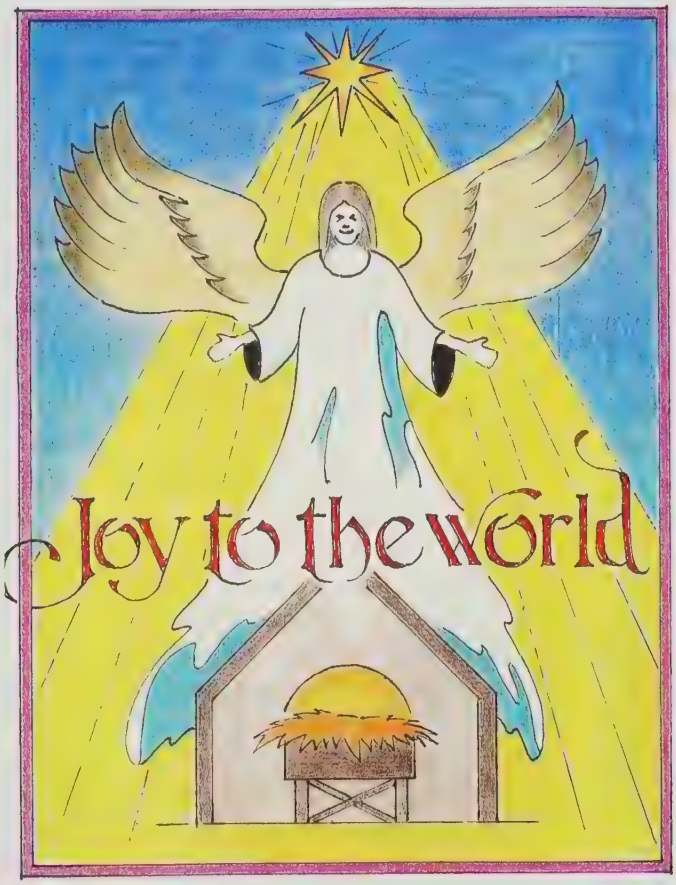
To list an obituary in the Record, please contact Deborah Leader at 1-800-619-7301 ext. 308 or dleader@presbyterian.ca.

FOR THE JOURNEY

The Reason for the Season

Biography of a Christmas sermon. By David Webber

I don't know why it is. I always seem to have problems putting together a Christmas sermon. I read over the texts, and I love to read them, but what can one say about them that is new and fresh? As I do my background work, studying the text, reading the many commentaries that surround my desk, I feel numbed. I have read them all before. It's like I have taken them in and been inoculated from catching a full dose of Christmas. And the writer's itch that usually inspires me, and sometimes compels me to write, seems to have mystically received a dose of calamine lotion. Every year it seems to be the same.



RICHARD DENSMORE, ST. JAMES, HANWELL, N.B.

This year is no different. For hours I sit between the scripture text and a blank page, lost in sermon Never Never Land. For hours more, my creative mind is in turmoil as I ponder; when I drive, when I stare at the Christmas tree joyfully lighting up our living room, when I lie awake in the small hours of the night in my bed. What Christmas message can I bring from God's word? What I am looking for, in fact pleading in prayer for, is a large idea, a strikingly fresh concept concerning the birth of Jesus.

The text I am thinking about is Luke Chapter 2, more specifically the angel's words to the shepherds on the first Christmas: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." I am focusing on the three titles: Saviour, Christ, and Lord. In fact, I am doing a detailed word study, hoping that this futile linguistic excavation will somehow produce the ore from which I can refine a sermon. But my mind wanders, as it often has a bad habit of doing, to the last part of the text that I am working on, to Mary's response to what the shepherds told her. The words draw me in: "But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart."

Pondered them in her heart... pondered them in her heart... pondered them in her heart. The phrase goes on and on, over and over in my head. It is getting in the way of the theological digging I am trying to do. And so I quit and turn off the computer on which I am trying to write. Sleep is my hoped-for release.

But the phrase won't leave me alone: "But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart." What words had Mary been pondering in her heart? I have to go back to the text to make sure. The light goes on. I check the text. It makes it clear to me that Mary was pondering in her heart the words the shepherds had received from the angel concerning her newborn son: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." The light goes off.

The phrase still will not leave me alone: "But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart." It goes on and on, over and over in my head until it becomes ›

NELLEKE CALDER, ST. JAMES, HANWELL N.B.

a command, "ponder the words in *my* heart." And somehow in the night's dark furnace I find the angel's words, which became the shepherd's words, which became the words that Mary pondered in her heart, and they get lodged in my heart, too. And whether I want to or not, I am pondering them in the centre of my being: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

And a strange thing happens. Gradually the focus changes from the large theological words of Saviour, Christ and Lord to a small word with little apparent theological significance. The little word, *you*.

"To *you* is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ, the Lord. To *you* is born... to *you* is born... to *you*....

To me? To me is born? To me is born a Saviour, Christ, Lord?

The light goes on. The message of Christmas is found for me afresh and anew. That very old and small but precious message, that message that penetrates my heart now as it must have penetrated the hearts of shepherds, the heart of Mary, the hearts of wise men, some 2,000 years ago. The baby in the manger is not about abstract, lofty theological ideas. In fact, such things may well cover the precious, fresh revelation of Christmas like so much overburden.

It is so clear and new to me now. It's all about an all-powerful, creating, loving and saving God, choosing to show me the depth, width and height of His love by coming in human flesh. And the poignancy of this act is that He does it for me. And as this realization soaks in, what the babe in the manger reveals is that I am, that you are, that the world is, loved and known intimately by God almighty, one person at a time.

The Christmas message is one that uses God's self-revelation in the baby Jesus to help you and me to move from thinking of God as part of our lives to the startling realization that we are forever a part of God's life. That we are forever on the mind of God. That we are forever before His throne of grace. That the oft-termed "Christ Event" is about God who knows us personally from the very beginning of time, reaching out with the arms of the Christ child saying, "Do you believe me yet? I love you personally with a passion that defies human experience. I am born for you in a manger in Bethlehem."

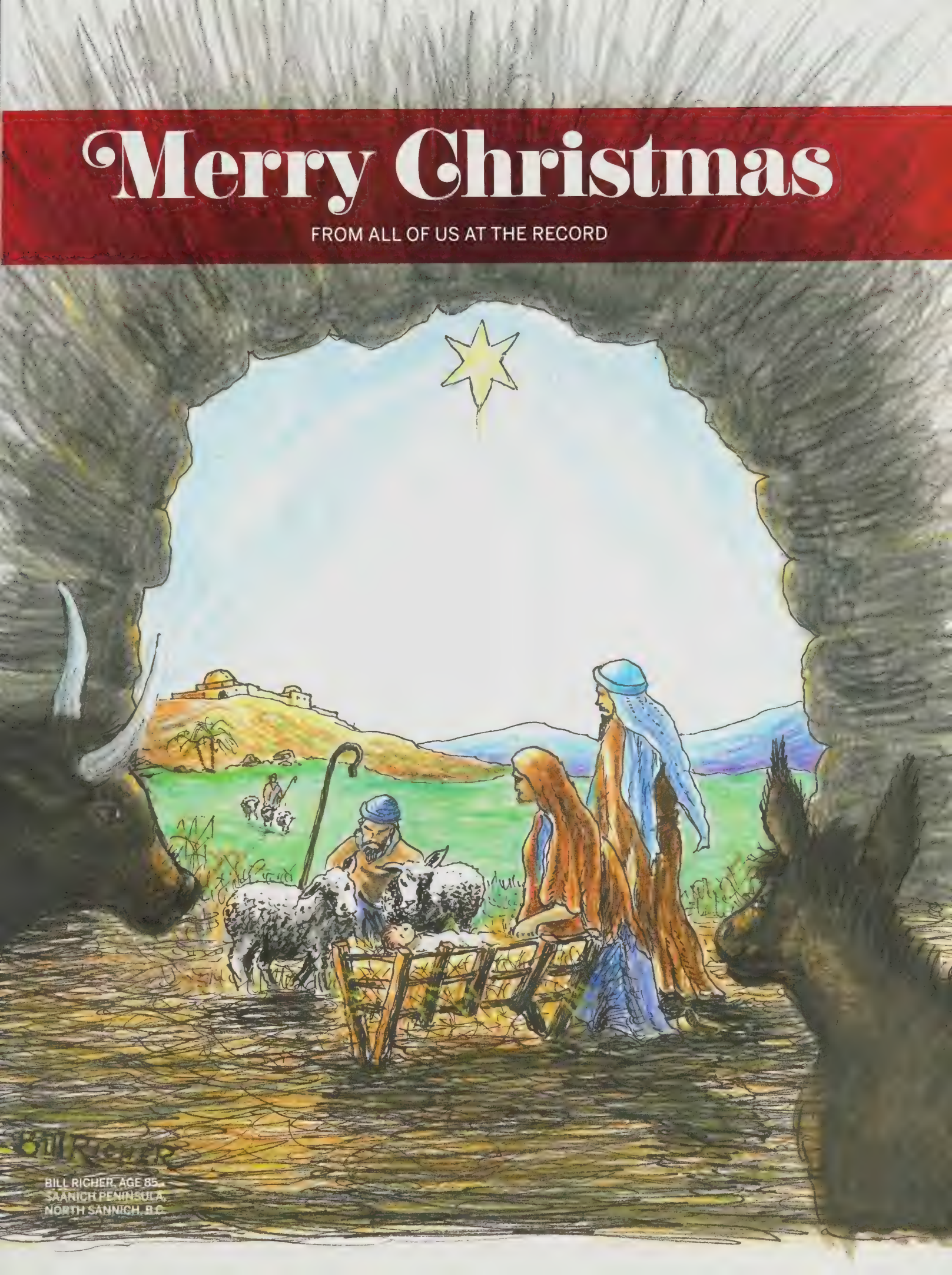
Christmas; the birth of a saving, anointed Lord, who comes not to condemn you, rather to reach out to you in a profound personal way that cannot help but wake you up to the fact of God's individual and personal love for you. Unto you is born this day ... your Saviour ... your Messiah/Christ ... your *Lord*. It's deeply personal and universal.

There is a bumper sticker that reads, "Jesus is the reason for the season." And I know now that nothing could be further from the truth. Jesus is not the reason for the season. You are the reason for the season. The season is all about you ... all about me ... all about God loving us all, one person at a time. The words ring loud and true: "... to *you* is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ, the Lord."

David Webber, now retired, was the founding missionary in the unique Cariboo house church ministry in central British Columbia. The most recent of his four books, When the Aspen Flowers, *can be ordered through webberink@telus.net.*

Merry Christmas

FROM ALL OF US AT THE RECORD



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